

Promoting Peaceful Coexistence and Common Citizenship

Proceedings from the 2018 International Conference

KAICIID
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DIALOGUE
CENTRE

Promoting Peaceful Coexistence and Common Citizenship

Proceedings from the 2018 International Conference

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A man with glasses and a mustache, wearing a dark suit, white shirt, and patterned tie, is speaking at a clear acrylic podium. The podium features the KAICIID logo and the text 'DIALOGUE CENTRE'. The background is a solid blue color.

“Religion, especially in the Arab world, is a powerful motivating force, and a source of shared identity for millions of people.

For too long, we have allowed religion to be hijacked and used as justification for causing pain and suffering. With the launch of this platform, the leaders of religious communities say “enough” to this manipulation and misuse.

There has been enough talk, and not enough action. Through this platform, we will set a visible, tangible example of interreligious cooperation.”

KAICIID Secretary General
HE Faisal Bin Abdulrahman Bin Muaammar

About the International Dialogue Centre



The KAICIID Board of Directors comprises prominent representatives from five world religions — Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism, Islam, and Judaism

The International Dialogue Centre (KAICIID) is an international organization with the mission of promoting dialogue to help people to understand and respect different religions and cultures.

The Centre works to promote diversity and understanding and to strengthen social cohesion. It is the first intergovernmental organization that teams up policymakers and religious representatives to encourage dialogue between people who may never meet or enjoy mutual trust, and to talk through their problems, especially if there is a cultural or religious issue at stake.

The Founding States of the Centre — the Republic of Austria, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and the Kingdom of Spain, with the Holy See as a founding observer — constitute the Council of Parties responsible for overseeing the work of the Centre. The governing Board of Directors comprises representatives of five major religions, representing approximately 80 per cent of the world’s followers of religions, and is thus a unique asset to the international community. The Advisory Forum, comprising influential leaders from major religions as well as religious and cultural institutions and communities representing more than 20 countries, supports the activities of the Board of Directors and advises on the Centre’s programmes.

Through its networks, the Centre has access to religious communities around the world. Combined with the support

of the member governments, the Centre promotes collaboration between religious and secular leadership that can create new, more inclusive solutions.

The Centre takes no side in any conflict since it is inclusive of all religions, yet not bound to any single faith or denomination.

By promoting dialogue, the Centre helps communities to build peace and harmonious societies. To achieve this, the Centre fosters cooperation between diverse religious communities to close the divisions created when religion is manipulated to engender fear and hatred.

Our vision is a world in which there is respect, understanding and cooperation among people; justice, peace and reconciliation; and an end to the abuse of religion to justify repression, violence and conflict.

Our roles

- ❖ We help create the platforms, knowledge, and commitment that foster interreligious dialogue (IRD) and strengthen social cohesion in our focus countries
- ❖ We support international and national institutions in using IRD to work for positive change
- ❖ We convene religious leaders, policymakers and other stakeholders to engage in IRD
- ❖ We create and disseminate knowledge on IRD to help achieve peace and reconciliation.

What we do

We promote IRD to help find sustainable solutions to contemporary challenges and conflict situations, working in four priority areas:

- ❖ Applying IRD for peace and reconciliation in four distinct scenarios in the Arab region, Central African Republic, Myanmar and Nigeria
- ❖ Capacity-building efforts, which aim to empower religious leaders to become active peacemakers in communities experiencing conflict and division
- ❖ Working to advocate on behalf of IRD with international organizations, policymakers and other stakeholders
- ❖ Offering, through the Dialogue Knowledge Hub, a virtual platform with resources for the field of dialogue worldwide.

The Council of Parties



“Dialogue has proven its efficiency in combating stereotypes and prejudices as well as in strengthening democracy, human rights and the rule of law”

HE Dr. Michael Linhart
Secretary General for Foreign Affairs
Republic of Austria



“We have to resort to soft power and moderate discourse. We also need to positively use the same scientific and technological tools, which are misused by extremists”

HE Nizar Madani
State Minister for Foreign Affairs
Kingdom of Saudi Arabia



“We need platforms of religious leaders in favour of peace, especially in conflict areas where action is urgent”

HE Belén Alfaro
Ambassador at large for the Alliance of Civilizations
and for Interreligious Dialogue



“Peace cannot be built without justice; this is why a just peace is a necessity”

Speech delivered by Bishop Miguel Ayuso on behalf of
HE Cardinal Jean-Louis Tauran,
President of the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue

The Board of Directors



“My experience has enhanced my conviction that centres of dialogue and conferences for peaceful coexistence are undoubtedly a necessity in our times”

Dr. Hamad Al-Majed
Faculty Member, Imam Muhammad Bin Saud University



“Mahatma Ghandi reminded us that every big step towards change need not be a loud, violent revolution”

Dr. Kezevino Aram
President, Shanti Ashram



“How necessary peace and reconciliation are today in our world that is so in need of promoting a culture of dialogue and inclusivism, respectful of every person”

HE Bishop Miguel Ayuso
Titular Bishop of Luperciana, Secretary of the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue



“We are not here as masters, but to listen to one another; to listen to the experiences that everybody can bring”

HE Metropolitan Emmanuel
Exarch of the Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople



“One should understand that incursion offers a single illusion of stability but is destructive to true and eternal stability”

The Reverend Kosho Niwano
President-Designate Rissho Kosei-Kai



“Correctly established relations between state and religion are basic terms of a successful multicultural and tolerant society”

Sheikh Ul-Islam A. Pashazade
Chairman of the Caucasus Muslims’ Board, and Sheikh Ul-Islam of Caucasus



“Interpretation of scripture is still the battleground for all of us. If we deny others the identity in faith that they claim, then we push them to the margins”

The Reverend Mark Poulson
Secretary for Interreligious Affairs to the Archbishop of Canterbury and National Interreligious Affairs Adviser for the Church of England



“Dialogue must never be dismissed as just talk, for the talk is the encounter, is the knowledge, is the overcoming of misunderstanding, misrepresentation and hostility.”

Chief Rabbi David Rosen
International Director of Interreligious Affairs, American Jewish Committee



“Bridge-building is daily, continuous work. It is not something that can ever be fully accomplished. The beauty of it is that it is a bridge between the hearts, minds and souls of people of different cultures and of different religions; a bridge that can be felt but not seen”

Dr. Mohammad Sammak
Secretary-General of the National Committee for Christian-Muslim Dialogue

The Platform

On 26 February 2018, twenty-three of the highest religious authorities from Muslim and Christian institutions across the Arab region committed to work together to rebuild and protect their communities from the effects of violent extremist rhetoric and actions. In a historic initiative, they launched the first interreligious platform to advocate for the rights and inclusion of all communities in the Arab World, to combat ideologies exploiting anxiety, and instigating hatred, and sectarianism, and to jointly address the toughest challenges their communities face.

The dialogue platform is the pioneering initiative of the International Dialogue Centre (KAICIID), an intergovernmental organization based in Vienna, Austria.

Designed to connect religious leaders with policymakers in the region, the platform will consist of three organs: a general assembly which will meet at least once a year, a representative committee, which will consist of the highest rank of religious leaders, and an administrative committee, which will be supported by KAICIID.

The participating institutions of the platform have agreed on a series of activities that include:

- ❖ Working with local and national authorities to review existing policies and propose new policies to promote social cohesion and equal rights
- ❖ Meetings with national and international policymakers to advocate for common citizenship and address the challenges in the region such as migration and resettlement
- ❖ Training clergy (of all religions) on how to combat discourses of hatred and exclusion, especially when targeted at youth in their communities
- ❖ Supporting a curricula of religious education adopted by member institutions that promote understanding and acceptance of those of other religions (through a focus on the historical religious diversity of the region)
- ❖ Implementing at least 20 initiatives a year on issues of shared concern, with a special focus on activities that benefit young people and women.

Founding Members

HE Sheikh Dr. Saleh bin Abdul-Aziz Aal-Al-Sheikh
Minister of Islamic Affairs and Dawaa

Dr. Ahmad Al Abbadi
Secretary General, Al Rabita Al-Muhammadiyah Association for Scholars

HE Dr. Mohammad bin Abdul Karim Al-Issa
Secretary General, Muslim World League

HE Sheikh Dr. Mohammad Al-Khalyleh
Grand Mufti of Jordan

HE Sheikh Jawwad Al-Khoei
Secretary General, Al Khoei institute

HE Sheikh Dr. Shawki Ibrahim Allam
Grand Mufti of Egypt

HB Cardinal Mar Béchara Boutros Al-Rai
Maronite Patriarch of Antioch and All the East, and Head of Commission for Catholic Bishops of the Middle East

Dr. Souraya Bechealany
Acting Secretary General, The Middle East Council of Churches

HE Sheikh Saleh bin Abdullah bin Hamid
Grand Imam of the Great Mosque of Mecca

HE Sheikh Abdul Latif Derian
Grand Mufti of Lebanon

HE Sayed Ali El-Amine
Grand Scholar

Prof. Dr. Hichem Grissa
Rector of El-Zitouna University, Tunisia

HE Sheikh al-Aql Naim Hassan
Head of the Druze Council in Lebanon

HE Sheikh Muhammad Hussein
Grand Mufti of Jerusalem and Palestine

HE Abdul Amir Kabaln
Head of The Supreme Shiite Council

HH Catholicos Aram I Keshishian
Head of the Catholicosate of the Great House of Cilicia

HB Patriarch Yogganna X Yazigi
Greek Orthodox Patriarch of Antioch and All the East

Rev. Dr. Andrea Zaki
President of the Coptic Protestant Community in Egypt

Gathering on the opening day of the Conference — Interreligious Dialogue for Peace: Promoting Peaceful Coexistence and Common Citizenship — held in Vienna, Austria on February 26–27, 2018



Over the two-day conference, prominent religious leaders, policymakers and experts participated in a series of discussions on topics such as the role of religious leaders and policymakers in promoting common citizenship; global partnerships for dialogue and promoting social cohesion; interreligious education and common citizenship values; and social media as a space for dialogue. The cornerstone of the conference was the launching of a historic, first of its kind, interreligious dialogue platform for the Arab world

Acknowledgements

The Centre is grateful to those who attended the High Level Meeting, including representatives of KAICIID’s Council of Parties, Board of Directors, Advisory Forum, as well as religious leaders, policymakers, civil society leaders and dialogue activists.

In particular, we would like to extend our special thanks to each of our esteemed speakers and panelists for their contributions, not only to this book, but to furthering social cohesion and common citizenship around the world.

Photographs of the conference are by Daniel Shaked and Kaleb Warnock, on behalf of KAICIID.

In memoriam of His Eminence Cardinal Jean-Louis Tauran (1943–2018), valued friend of dialogue.

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KAICIID
H.E. Faisal Bin Abdulrahman Bin Musammar

INTERRELIGIOUS DIALOGUE FOR PEACE:
PROMOTING PEACEFUL COEXISTENCE
AND COMMON CITIZENSHIP

26 - 27 FEBRUARY 2018, VIENNA
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KAICIID Secretary General, HE Faisal Bin Abdulrahman Bin Musammar addresses the participants at the opening ceremony of the Interreligious Dialogue for Peace, urging them to bridge the gaps between communities with the values of social cohesion and common citizenship

Interreligious dialogue for peace — promoting peaceful coexistence and common citizenship

KAICIID Secretary General, HE Faisal Bin Abdulrahman Bin Muaammar

Your All-Holiness, Your Beatitudes, Your Virtue, Eminences, Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen — I am honoured to welcome you to the The International Dialogue Centre (KAICIID), as we gather here for the Second High Level Meeting to promote peaceful coexistence and common citizenship around the world.

Since its inception, KAICIID has taken a leading role as an advocate for religious and political leaders to work closely in finding common solutions to the challenge of violent extremism. Having heard our recommendations, policymakers now recognize that to counter division, promote coexistence and foster the values of common citizenship they must include religious leaders as equal partners in that process. Policymakers can benefit from the knowledge and grassroots influence of religious leaders such that both secular and religious leaders find common ground in shared values.

We must not fear religion, as it forms part of the solution to the problem of hatred. The root causes of violent extremism can be more effectively removed when religion's true intent is widely and correctly understood.

Three years ago, we united here in Vienna, in solidarity, to preserve religious diversity and social cohesion in the region and to reject any attempt to manipulate religion to justify violence. Since then we have worked with religious leaders and communities to promote their capacity to build bridges of understanding and cooperation between them.

In the face of crisis and loss, I have witnessed religious leaders' courageous stand against prejudice and hatred. They have the power to engage the moderate majority of the faithful. Our mission is to enable that majority to take a step towards people of other religions and cultures in order to understand and respect the Other.

Through dialogue, the international community and religious leaders have, over the past three years, established a best practice partnership between themselves and policymakers to develop concrete and lasting solutions. Around the world, religious leaders are at the forefront of rebuilding coexistence between religious communities and helping to

foster the value of shared citizenship. That vision of interreligious cooperation is KAICIID's foundation.

The Board of Directors convened here today includes renowned advocates for interreligious cooperation, representing Hindu, Jewish, Buddhist, Christian, and Muslim communities. Also many members of the Advisory Council join us here today, comprising religious leaders and advocates representing diverse religions.

The Centre receives vital support from its founding countries — the Republic of Austria, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, the Kingdom of Spain and the Holy See as a

HE Faisal Bin Abdulrahman Bin Muaammar KAICIID Secretary General

HE Faisal Bin Abdulrahman Bin Muaammar was appointed Secretary General of the Vienna-based International Dialogue Centre (KAICIID) in October 2012. Prior to the appointment, he held a number of senior positions in the Saudi Arabian administration and with various nonprofit organizations.

Among the highlights of a distinguished career, which has encompassed major roles in state government and international organizations, the Secretary General has served as Vice Minister of Education of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, Adviser to the Royal Court of the then Crown Prince Abdullah bin Abdulaziz Al Saud, and Deputy of the National Guard for Cultural and Educational Affairs. The Secretary General was instrumental in the foundation of the King Abdulaziz Public Library in 1987, and the King Abdulaziz Centre for National Dialogue in Riyadh (KACND) in 2003. He continues to work as Supervisor General of the Public Library as well as Adviser to the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques, King Salman bin Abdulaziz Al Saud.



founding observer. I also thank these nations' representatives for their presence here today.

At our first meeting in 2014, in this very room, you agreed upon an action plan that KAICIID would put into practice. I'm glad to report that your decisions became measurable actions. You asked us to support young people and to use social media to recruit followers in the use of dialogue, against hate. Young people can and will change the world and we must give them the tools to make sure that the change is positive. We have a responsibility to our youth to use the opportunity presented by social media to demonstrate a model for solidarity.

These media tools can be utilized to help young people appreciate religious identities and respect diversity. Divisive rhetoric is more easily recognized and rejected when others are seen as peers rather than stereotypes. Dialogue through

social media will offer their young peers an accurate and sympathetic understanding of young people of different religions rather than a false and biased picture.

In the past three years, we trained approximately 400 young community leaders of different religions and denominations from Tunisia to Iraq. These young people are, in turn, training other young people. Every day the group of trainees is increasing and, now that they are connected across the region, they will launch social media campaigns together. These campaigns will offer many social media users a perspective that respects all religions and identities.

You also asked us to support the Islamic and Christian educational institutions that train future religious leaders to introduce interreligious dialogue into their teaching. We therefore launched the very first Network for Religious Muslim and Christian Faculties and Institutes in the Arab

World. This network will develop a common curriculum on interreligious dialogue training for these religious institutions. The core group of sixteen institutions will exchange students between faculties, as well as share expertise to bind them together. One of the faculty members told us that the Network made it possible for his institution to have its very first meeting with a Christian faculty to discuss how to teach dialogue in seminary schools.

And finally, in the past three years, we have established or strengthened interreligious platforms in the Central African Republic, Myanmar and Nigeria. In each of these countries, as well as in Beirut, we have posted country experts who are in constant contact with their religious community and governmental partners; and I am pleased to say that they are also with us today.

We are very honoured that His Eminence, the Cardinal of Abuja, the Sultan of Sokoto, and the President of the Christian Association of Nigeria are taking part in this meeting. They are leading figures in the Christian-Muslim dialogue platform in Nigeria that we support. The platform speaks out against ethnic and religious violence, and has drafted legislation to outlaw all hate preaching by any denomination. The legislation is now in deliberation in the Nigerian Parliament.

We are also grateful that two of the founders of the Central African Republic interreligious platform have travelled to this conference. We are proud to support the platform which undertakes projects to rebuild trust and peace in the country. One project uses dialogue to help people who have been driven from their homes in the recent conflict to return to the neighbourhood they had fled.

At this point, I wish to extend our thanks to the United Religions Initiative, one of the world's largest interreligious NGOs, which granted KAICIID the 2018 African Peace Prize for its work in interreligious dialogue in Africa.

In Myanmar, the Centre supports an NGO, the Peaceful Myanmar Initiative and, here too, I thank the three members who have travelled from Myanmar to be with us. Their platform is young, yet it has successfully organized an annual national interreligious conference. In a breakthrough, they have provided intensive interreligious dialogue training to Buddhist Masters from the leading Burmese Buddhist academic institutions.

Our work also includes cooperation with international organizations such as the United Nations. It is a pleasure to welcome to this conference our good friend, Mr. Adama Dieng, the UN Secretary General's Special Adviser for the Prevention of Genocide. Special Adviser Dieng, the World

Council of Churches and the Network of Religious and Traditional Peacemakers are some of our partners to whom we are grateful for their shared commitment and efforts.

The Centre was privileged to contribute to the Global Action Plan along with these partners. The Plan provides religious leaders with the capacity to prevent incitement that leads to genocide. Having worked together for two years, gathering over 200 religious leaders in meetings around the world, the Global Action Plan was ratified by the United Nations Secretary General and we are now engaged in supporting its implementation.

Now we are extending our hands to you. We invite you to support and celebrate the launch of the first Interreligious Platform for Dialogue and Cooperation in the Arab World. The platform will offer Christians and Muslims in Arab countries the means to establish cooperation and understanding in order to secure and strengthen common citizenship, bridging the gap between communities. Never before have religious leaders of different communities worked jointly across national borders in a coordinated manner, but we hope that this platform will set a precedent.

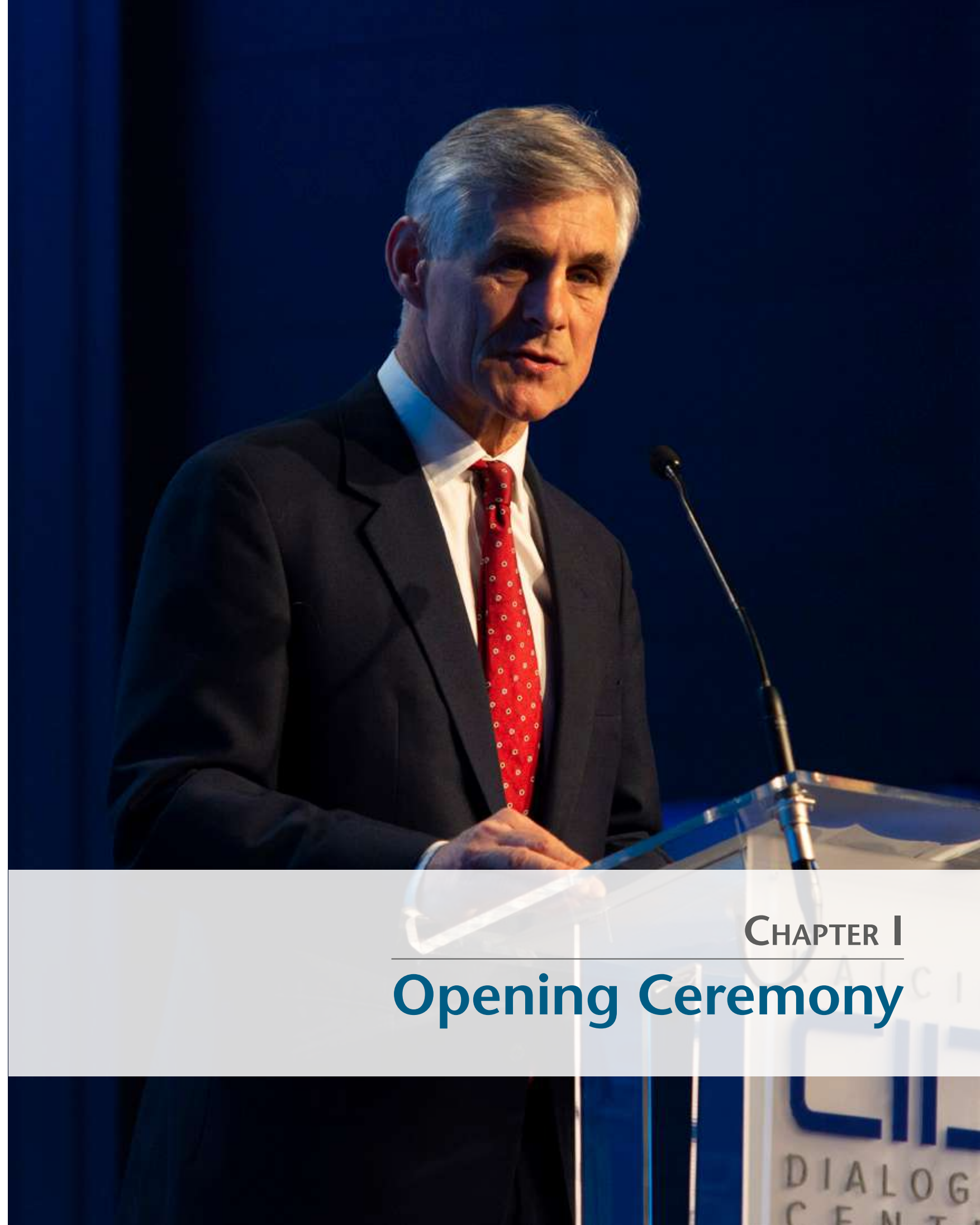
We are not given a chance for peace every day. I urge you all to seize this chance

We will build partnerships between religious leaders across the region to advocate the protection and preservation of the rights of all religious communities in the Arab world under the umbrella of common citizenship and equality, regardless of religion, sect or ethnicity. The unity of purpose between Christians and Muslims on vital issues, such as common citizenship cannot be ignored. Unity among religious leaders is the strongest message of hope the region has seen in many years.

KAICIID is here for the long run. We will help these religious leaders to build their own new platform.

We are not given a chance for peace every day. I urge you all to seize this chance. It will not be easy or quick, yet together we will build a platform that bridges nations and religious communities around the world.

Once again, I welcome you and wish you good health, a pleasant stay and, most importantly, much dialogue.



CHAPTER I

Opening Ceremony

HE Dr. Michael Linhart

Your Holiness, the Secretary General, the host of this event, Eminences, Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen — as representative of the Austrian government and the Secretary General of the Austrian Foreign Ministry, it is my honour and pleasure to welcome this distinguished congregation here in Vienna to the Second High Level Meeting on Interreligious Dialogue for Peace; Promoting Peaceful Coexistence and Common Citizenship.

Mr. Secretary General, I wish to thank you for organizing this important conference, conceived as a platform to exchange views and experiences as well as a point from which to take further action to encourage social cohesion and peaceful coexistence, based on mutual understanding and on interreligious and intercultural dialogue.

This meeting is also an appropriate opportunity to

celebrate the Centre's fifth anniversary and, looking at the distinguished participants who stand for the Centre's achievements, there is certainly reason to celebrate.

KAICIID has become an important and eminent partner in dialogue for Austria and the international community alike. By establishing and supporting dialogue platforms in conflict areas, the Centre contributes to generating a better understanding among religions, religious leaders, policymakers and representatives of international organizations.

We welcome the Centre as an international organization well-established here in Vienna, thereby strengthening Austria's role as a venue for dialogue and for further international collaboration. We're confident that by implementing the 2016–2019 Strategic Plan and further reinforcing international relations, the Centre will continue to unfold its great potential and realise the objectives enshrined in the founding agreement.



In Austria's view, progress in the Process of EU Enlargement is now of particular relevance, and contributes to the growing interest in the Centre's work, further enhancing its status on the local and global stage. With its multireligious Board of Directors, we represent the major world religions. Thanks to the support of the eminent members of the Advisory Forum and the network of its Member States and international partners, the Centre is suited unlike any other to promote respect, trust and understanding among people

Dialogue has proven its efficiency in combating stereotypes and prejudices as well as in strengthening democracy, human rights and the rule of law

in their quest for peaceful coexistence and cooperation.

We currently witness conflicts where religion is misused to justify violence, thereby polarizing and dividing religious communities as well as cultural and social relations within societies. Promoting peace and understanding through encounters and dialogue, according to the Centre's mission and expertise, is exactly what is urgently needed. Austria has supported the idea of a permanent institution for dialogue from the beginning — building trust through dialogue between cultures and religions has been an integral part of Austrian foreign policy for a long time.

Dialogue has proven its efficiency in combating stereotypes and prejudices as well as in strengthening democracy, human rights and the rule of law. Against the backdrop of migration and integration, we are called to further advance dialogue in order to secure peaceful understanding, cultural and religious diversity and to fight extremism, hate and violence. Because religion plays an important role in many societies, the exchange with religious leaders has become increasingly important for policymakers.

We highly value the insight of religious leaders into people's lives as well as the capacity for dialogue. I'm pleased to see here some of the esteemed dialogue partners I've had the pleasure to meet regularly over the past few years. I'm convinced that the exchange and cooperation between

policymakers and religious leaders is for the benefit of our democratic societies, notwithstanding the separation of state and religions in their respective areas of responsibility.

The former foreign minister, Sebastian Kurz, established a dialogue process with the leaders of the 16 legally recognized churches and religious communities in Austria, and many of them are present here today. They agreed on the Joint Statement for Freedom of Religions and Belief and the protection of religious minorities as well as protection against the abuse of religions to justify oppression, violence and conflict. Furthermore, Austria developed a variety of initiatives consistent with the January 2016 Action Plan of the Secretary General of the United Nations which recommended the establishment of dialogue platforms.

The plan further emphasised the important role of religious leaders in condemning crimes committed in the name of religion and to provide better education on the peaceful practice of religions. It is this sort of dialogue that needs to be taken to the regional and global levels, and it is exactly this initiative that KAICIID, with a multireligious and multi-stakeholder approach, has taken with the 2014 conference,

HE Dr. Michael Linhart
Secretary General for Foreign Affairs
Republic of Austria

Dr. Linhart entered the Federal Ministry for Foreign Affairs (BMAA) in 1986. He then served at the headquarters of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in various directorates including the OSCE, Consular Affairs, and Multilateral Economic Affairs. Over his illustrious career, he has served in numerous diplomatic posts including in Addis Ababa, Damascus, Zagreb, Syria and Greece. Dr. Linhart was appointed Deputy Chief of Cabinet to the Federal Minister for Foreign Affairs, Wolfgang Schüssel. He then became Foreign Affairs Adviser to Chancellor Schüssel and then Director General of the Austrian Development Agency (ADA), the operational unit of the Austrian Development Cooperation.

Since 2013 Dr. Linhart served as Secretary General for Foreign Affairs for the Republic of Austria. In April 2018, after the close of the conference, he was appointed Head of the Austrian Embassy in Paris.

United Against Violence in the Name of Religion, as well as with the joint high level Religious Leaders' Platform, which will be launched here today.

Moreover, it is of major interest to policymakers that they understand the role of religions and value systems in international politics. Therefore, Austria in preparation for the EU presidency later this year, has initiated an informal exchange process among the EU 28 on value systems and diplomacy in the so-called Vienna group. Dialogue needs knowledge and education, which is also true for policymakers and representatives of

religious communities. Therefore, the focus on education and social media as a space for dialogue in this second high level meeting is a meaningful way forward to improve the efforts and the outcome of the work conducted since 2014.

This conference will certainly produce further important policies in this regard. I wish all of us inspirational discussions and encounters during these two days, and that we may contribute to building bridges for a peaceful future. I invite all those who have come especially to Vienna for this conference to enjoy our beautiful city.

HE Nizar Madani

Our Lord, may peace be upon our Prophet and his companions. Your Excellencies, Your Eminences, KAICIID Secretary General and Distinguished Assembly — may the peace of God be upon you. It is my pleasure to participate in this gathering in its second session, entitled Promoting Peaceful Coexistence and Common Citizenship. I would like to seize the opportunity to congratulate the Secretary General and the KAICIID board on the fifth anniversary of the establishment of this important organization.

Since then we have witnessed huge efforts through sessions, seminars and workshops, engaging more than 20 countries worldwide. These efforts reflect the high commitment of each of the Member States and religious leaders, to the success of this Centre. I would like to congratulate KAICIID for having obtained the 2018 Africa Peace Prize for its promotion of the role of interreligious dialogue.

Ladies and gentlemen, from the land of peace, from the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, where the initiative of interreligious dialogue was launched ten years ago, it is my honour to convey the best regards of my king and the crown prince, who work very hard to establish peace and stability and to promote old values of tolerance and brotherhood worldwide.

We are here today to celebrate all of the divine messages of all religions. The misuse of religion to justify any crime or violent act committed in its name is a huge mistake. We affirm that all divine texts unanimously condemn all violent acts committed in the name of religion. Today's meeting is a quantum leap toward facing this very serious and critical

situation worldwide. That is why we call upon this meeting to adopt all recommendations that promote common citizenship and peace, by condemning all violence committed in the name of religion.

I am sure that all of you here today are able to find the best solutions for eradicating this problem. Distinguished assembly, I am sure you are aware of the threats being spread by the dissemination of extremist ideas and thoughts, which are based upon intolerance and fanaticism. As you know, these

HE Nizar Madani
State Minister for Foreign Affairs
Kingdom of Saudi Arabia

Born in Medina, HE Nizar Madani joined the Saudi Arabian Ministry of Foreign Affairs in 1965. In 1987, the Council of Ministers appointed him to the post of Ambassador. In 1993, he was appointed as a member of the Shura Council where he headed the Foreign Affairs Committee.

He has served as the State Minister for Foreign Affairs since 2005 and his delegation has represented at meetings with the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) and the League of Arab States, as well as with the United Nations General Assembly.



We have to resort to soft power and moderate discourse. We also need to positively use the same scientific and technological tools, which are misused by extremists

extremist ideologies generate violence which leads to a vicious cycle of terrorism. That is why we cannot neglect any violent act committed in the name of religion, for whatever reason.

What makes this phenomenon even more dangerous, is that much of the violence today takes place in virtual space, shortening the distance by targeting thousands of accounts on social media, which has become faster and more powerful than other traditional platforms. In order to face these threats, we have to uphold values of tolerance and respect for diversity,

as well as the promotion of peace and interreligious dialogue.

In addition to promoting a culture of tolerance and peaceful coexistence, we have to be determined to combat fanaticism and racism in all forms. All faith-based organizations and intellectual associations that have influence should join our efforts to combat extremist organizations. We cannot just condemn violent acts and thoughts. We must also be well aware that firm discourse, held in the face of those thoughts, will have significant outcomes.

That is why we have to resort to soft power and moderate discourse. We also need to positively use the same scientific and technological tools, which are misused by extremists. The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia has always been aware of these challenges. This is why, through a process of development and by exploring the future, we hold an intermediate and balanced stance based upon peaceful coexistence and noble human values.

King Salman Bin Abdulaziz, may God protect him, has stated the following: "There is no room for any fanatic or extremist, who misuses religious values to spread or achieve his objectives." The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, since it was

established, has worked to promote peace worldwide and to respect all human values, based upon our religion of Islam, which is the religion of science, ethics, and peace.

Thanks to the support of King Salman Bin Abdulaziz, our kingdom is moving forward by promoting tolerance and peaceful coexistence, based upon common citizenship as well as promoting human initiatives, which are aimed at disseminating peace and the spread of interreligious dialogue without discrimination. Within this framework, we have been, and will continue to work on, increasing international efforts to prevent intervention in the affairs of other countries or attempts to destabilize them. We shall continue to do this until we eradicate all forms of extremism. For this purpose, we are participating effectively in initiatives, through the King Abdulaziz Centre for Charity, designed to meet the needs of all victims of wars and natural disasters.

Distinguished Assembly — it is my honour to seize the opportunity to express the gratitude of my kingdom to the Republic of Austria for hosting this gathering and for hosting KAICIID here in Vienna. Thanks are also extended to the Kingdom of Spain for its fruitful cooperation. Thanks to KAICIID, which has been able to translate noble visions into concrete actions. Additional thanks to our successful partners, the Vatican, and all religious and faith based organizations that have supported this noble mission and assumed full responsibility in order to promote common citizenship and peaceful coexistence.

Finally, we look forward to achieving the objectives of this gathering, to create new approaches through the advancement of technology in order to endorse and strengthen peaceful coexistence and to be able to promote a human values-based system.

HE Belén Alfaro

*Speech given on behalf of HE Ildefonso Castro,
State Secretary for Foreign Affairs, Kingdom of Spain*

Your Holiness, Mr. Secretary General, Distinguished Participants — first of all, I would like to express to the Secretary General of KAICIID the government of Spain's deepest appreciation of the efforts that he is making in the development and direction of the Centre's activities. The government of Spain also wishes to highlight the important commitment of Saudi Arabia who envisioned this project and to thank His Majesty, King Salman of Saudi Arabia, for his support of this Centre. Thank you also to Austria for hosting the initiative and to the Holy See as founding observer.

The international community is now facing significant challenges. Globalization has brought a number of positive advantages, but it has also brought tensions through cultural and religious differences. Violent extremism and terrorism cannot and should not be linked to any one religion, nationality, civilization, or ethnic group. This is not a clash of civilizations. It is a confrontation between civilization and barbarism.

This phenomenon cannot be confused with Islam. The majority of the victims of the extremist groups are peaceful

Muslims — Islam means peace. Faced with such a situation, the international community cannot remain silent. The government of Spain praises KAICIID for launching, in 2014, the pioneering initiative: United Against Violence in the Name of Religion, and for the relevant programmes and projects that have been implemented.

The presence of high ranking religious leaders at this meeting is proof of their commitment to peace and the ending of violence. We need more interreligious dialogue. Religion is perceived by some as the origin of tensions. These perceptions misconceive the root causes of the problems, which are political or social but not religious. Religion is not the problem. On the contrary, it can contribute to the solution — religion can be a peacebuilder and a peacemaker. We need platforms of religious leaders in favour of peace, especially in conflict areas where action is urgent, and we need networks of local religious leaders who can reach diverse audiences, fostering peaceful coexistence.

In this respect, KAICIID's initiative of the regional dialogue platform for religious leaders and institutions in the



We need platforms of religious leaders in favour of peace, especially in conflict areas where action is urgent

Arab world, which will be launched at this conference, is very relevant. Also relevant is the work done by the United Nations Special Adviser for Genocide and the Responsibility to Protect, together with KAICIID, to develop several initiatives including the Fez process, the Plan of Action for Religious Leaders and Actors to Prevent Incitement to Violence that Could Lead to Atrocity Crimes, and the peacebuilding programmes implemented by KAICIID in Africa, the Middle East, and Asia.

I would like to highlight three priority areas for action: firstly, education. We need more intercultural and interreligious education, as well as education towards common citizenship and intercultural understanding. Secondly, the internet — the challenge of the future. We live in a network society and the voices of peace have to be heard. Thirdly, media. It is essential that the media are used as channels for dialogue and for promoting positive images of other cultures and religions.

We need a communication strategy. KAICIID has implemented very successful programmes in these areas such as the training programme in social media with young religious leaders, the network of religious institutions on interreligious dialogue, and the International Fellows Programme.

Lastly, I would like to mention two initiatives recently promoted by Spain, aiming at dialogue and reconciliation. Firstly, the Summit of Religious Leaders for Peace in the Middle East that was hosted in Alicante, Spain and co-sponsored by the United Nations Alliance of Civilization. More than 30

high-ranking Jewish, Muslim, and Christian religious leaders from Israel and Palestine met to engage in dialogue at the event. They adopted the Alicante Declaration calling for peace and moderation and agreed to create a standing committee.

Spain also hosted the International Conference on the Victims of Ethnic and Religious Violence in the Middle East, co-chaired by the Ministers of Foreign Affairs of Spain and Jordan. The conference presented the Madrid Priorities for Action, comprising the principal issues that must be

addressed in order to strengthen populations and facilitate their return, to maintain diversity and foster reconciliation, to protect cultural heritage, and to fight impunity.

Finally, I would like to emphasise that the promotion of tolerance and common understanding is a common endeavour. An endeavour of governments, international organizations, policymakers, religious leaders, young people, women, foundations, universities, and community leaders. Common cooperation is the only path to success.

HE Belén Alfaro

Ambassador at large for the Alliance of Civilizations and for Interreligious Dialogue

In 2011, Ambassador Alfaro was appointed Ambassador at large for the United Nations Alliance of Civilizations (UNAOC) and for Interreligious Dialogue at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Spain. Previously she was Minister Counsellor to the United Nations at the Mission of Spain.

Other diplomatic posts include Counsellor at the Permanent Representation of Spain to the EU in Brussels; Deputy Head of Mission for Spain to Pakistan

and Afghanistan; Senior Counsellor in the Cabinet of the Secretary of State for the EU; and Counsellor for Mediterranean affairs at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Spain. She received a master's degree in Law from Madrid Complutense University, a Certificate in Finance from New York University, a Diploma in Technical Financial Analysis from IEB and a Diploma of Antiquarian and Expert in Art Masterpieces from CREPAC in Brussels.

HE Bishop Miguel Ángel Ayuso Guixot

Speech given on behalf of HE Cardinal Jean-Louis Tauran, President of the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue

Your Eminence, Your Excellencies, Dear Friends — I greet you all most warmly. I am truly grateful for your kind invitation to participate as well as offer the opening speech at this meeting but, regretfully, I am not able to be present to do so. Nonetheless, I am pleased to address you with these words.

There are many who ask: “Is interreligious dialogue really useful?” The question is not necessarily posed maliciously, but more with a lack of awareness. People engaged in interreligious dialogue, in some cases for many years, find themselves compelled to reply openly and directly to

provide the required clarification.

The theme of this meeting makes it evident that interreligious dialogue is aimed at peacebuilding through two principal means — promoting peaceful coexistence and supporting our common citizenship. Peace, as we all know, cannot be promoted and safeguarded without commensurate justice. In this regard, truth, justice, love and freedom, the four pillars of peace mentioned in *Pacem in Terris*, the memorable encyclical letter of Saint Pope John XXIII, remain valid and relevant today. In his message for the World Day of Peace in 2003, Saint Pope John Paul II made



Peace cannot be built without justice; this is why a just peace is a necessity

reference to these pillars. In fact, his message for the World Day of Peace in 2002 was titled *No peace without justice, no justice without forgiveness*. Indeed, building peaceful coexistence among us requires that we also promote truth, justice, love and freedom.

Truth enjoys a place of honour in all religions. The recognition of this value by all believers and people of good will is important for peaceful relations among everyone. In this regard we are all called to promote a “culture of

inclusivism”, as proposed by Pope Francis. We are called to be companions to every person on the journey towards truth. The affirmation of Vatican II in the *Nostra Aetate* declaration on the relation of the Catholic Church to other religions says: “The Catholic Church rejects nothing that is true and holy in these religions. She regards with sincere reverence those ways of conduct and of life, those precepts and teachings which, though differing in many aspects from the ones she holds and sets forth, nonetheless often reflect a ray of that Truth which enlightens all men.”

Justice is a fundamental value for believers as well as for persons of good will not professing any religion. Fostering justice among individuals, communities and nations is of paramount importance. Peace cannot be built without justice; this is why a just peace is a necessity.

Love is one of the key core values in all religions, but it is particularly characteristic of Christianity which teaches that

“God is love” (1 John 4:7). Love of God and love of our brothers and sisters are two related commandments meaning that one cannot say that she loves God if she does not love her neighbour or, worse, hates him or her; he or she then is not a sincere person (cf. 1 John 2:20). Respect is another name for love.

Let me bring to mind once again how Pope Francis insists in inviting believers and people of good will to a dialogue of friendship and respect. Love, understood in this context of dialogue, is the summary of all that is required of a person. That is why Saint Augustine (354–430) said: “Love and do what you will.”

Freedom is the innate desire and the basic right of every person, community and peoples. Wars have been waged throughout human history, either to subjugate others so as to deprive them of their liberty, or to once again regain this very freedom which had been lost. We are now witnessing new forms of slavery in which our brothers and sisters are robbed of their freedom and enslaved in the form of: human trafficking, especially of women and children; forced labour, in particular of children; child soldiers; sexual abuse; and political and economic domination. We are called, therefore, to support those who struggle for their liberty in every place where we encounter such struggle.

Common citizenship is based on a God-given equality, expressed as rights and/or duties, regardless of ethnicity or religion. In this regard I quote Pope Francis in his address to the participants in a recent conference: “Tackling Violence Committed in the Name of Religion”. He said: “We need to show, with unremitting effort, that every human life is sacred, that it deserves respect, esteem, compassion and solidarity, without regard for ethnicity, religion, culture, or ideological and political convictions. Adherence to a particular religion does not confer additional dignity and rights upon individuals, nor does non-adherence deny or diminish them.” (2 February 2018).

Let us continuously engage ourselves, despite the differences of our religions and of our specific mission, to become promoters of peaceful coexistence and of common citizenship through interreligious dialogue.

**HE Bishop Miguel Ángel Ayuso Guixot, mccj
Titular Bishop of Luperciana, Secretary of the
Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue**

HE Bishop Ayuso is Titular Bishop of Luperciana and Secretary of the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue. He has always been active in interreligious dialogue, teaching in both Cairo and Rome as well as writing several important publications on issues related to Christian-Muslim dialogue. As a priest he worked in the local Church in Egypt and Sudan from 1982 to 2002.

Career summary

- ❖ Ordained Bishop, Titular See of Luperciana by Pope Francis, 2016
- ❖ Secretary of the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue, 2012–present
- ❖ President of the Pontifical Institute for Arabic and Islamic Studies (PISAI), 2005–2012
- ❖ Awarded a PhD in Theology by the Faculty of Theology of Granada, Spain, 2000
- ❖ Served as parish priest in Sacred Heart Parish in Abbassiyya/Cairo as well as director of the Pastoral, Liturgical and Catechetical Centre of El Obeid Diocese/Sudan, 1982–2002
- ❖ Member of the Comboni Missionaries.

His All-Holiness Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew

Esteemed Guests, Distinguished Participants, Ladies and Gentlemen — it is with great pleasure and personal joy that we find ourselves in your midst, in order to address this esteemed and honourable assembly. As a firm believer in the need for

dialogue and peace in our world, we give thanks to God, for He is the one that has brought us all together in this historic and beautiful city — a city that encourages and facilitates dialogue and fosters the spirit of peace. Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace and goodwill among all.



We bring you the warmest greetings of love and peace from the Ecumenical Patriarchate, the First See of the Orthodox Church. Over the years, our Church has maintained a pre-eminent role in promoting dialogue among churches, religions and cultures for the sake of a more welcoming and compassionate world. The Church has also been highly involved in advancing human rights, as well as protecting human freedom and dignity by hosting various initiatives and interreligious and international conferences.

Today, we honour the memory of the late King Abdullah bin Abdulaziz. It was the Custodian’s wish that we, religious and political leaders, join together in dialogue for the sake of peace in the world. For this purpose, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, with the support of the Kingdom of Spain, and the encouragement of the Republic of Austria and the

Vatican’s wisdom, founded the International Dialogue Centre (KAICIID). It is KAICIID’s belief and determination that dialogue should be the way towards rapprochement, confidence and cooperation that drives our intentions here in the capital of Austria. May God grant King Abdullah bin Abdulaziz Al Saud mercy, and may his legacy live on in the hearts of those whose lives he has transformed through peace.

We would also like to thank His Majesty King Salman bin Abdulaziz Al Saud for his humanitarian service to the world and for his commitment to promoting harmonious coexistence, mutual respect, and global peace. The establishment of the King Salman Centre for International Peace, in Malaysia last year, is a testimony of the Kingdom’s strong belief in the human will and capacity to make the world a more peaceful and liveable place.

Acharya Dr. Lokesh Muni, Bishop Miguel Ayuso, and Bhai Sahib Mohinder Singh enjoy a few minutes of conversation between panel discussions



We also extend a sincere thanks to His Excellency, Faisal Bin Muaammar, Secretary General of the KAICIID, and the planning committee for their fine work, as well as for inviting us to share our Orthodox approach to promoting peaceful coexistence and common citizenship.

It is indeed an extraordinary joy for us to be in the presence of so many tireless workers for peace, who have travelled to be in Vienna this week in order to participate in this conference and address the increasing threats that affect human dignity, understanding, openness and peace in today's world. May our work here bear fruit during a confusing and challenging time in our history.

Dear participants, on December 10, 1948, in Paris, the United Nations General Assembly proclaimed and translated The Universal Declaration of Human Rights into over five hundred languages. Article 18 of the Declaration specifically states that "Everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion; this right includes freedom to change his religion or belief, and freedom, either alone or in community with others and in public or private, to manifest his religion or belief in teaching, practice, worship and observance."

In March of 2011, UN Resolution 16/18 was enthusiastically adopted giving us a global policy framework for combating intolerance, stigmatization, discrimination, incitement to violence and violence against persons based on religion or belief.

In spite of the aforementioned documents and the broad mobilization and struggle for human rights following the conclusion of the Second World War, and lasting until today, it is an unfortunate fact that many governments around the world continue to create discriminatory legislation, and use force in order to suppress and deny their citizens' freedom of religion or belief. Over the last few years, the percentage of countries with high or very high levels of social hostility against religious minority groups has steadily increased around the globe. Conditions in many parts of the world are far from ideal. Religious intolerance and persecution regrettably remain far too prevalent. A great part of the global population lives under conditions of great restriction, or suffers acts of violence in an attempt to limit their religious persuasion and expression.

In recent years, religious persecution has continually risen in over thirty countries. Anti-Semitic attitudes are persistent and pervasive around the world. One-in-twelve Christians experience high to extreme persecution for their faith. Violence against the Rohingyas and Uyghurs, both

Muslim minorities living in Myanmar and China respectively, has reached a new high.

An answer to this unfortunate reality can be found in the wisdom of the Jewish spiritual leader Rabbi Hillel, who flourished in the first century before Christ, and said: "Do not do unto others what you would not want to be done unto you — that is the whole Torah; the rest is commentary".

Love surpasses human capacity. It is a divine gift. Therefore, we strongly believe that to achieve it demands much more than our human, spontaneous response. It requires something much more than our simple will to follow God's invitation

An answer is given by Jesus Christ: "So in everything, do to others what you would have them do to you, for this sums up the Law and the Prophets."

Answers exist in the basic texts of world religions where compassion, solidarity, respect, peace, mutual acceptance, and protection of the vulnerable, are central values.

One answer can be found in the unified voice of the Holy and Great Council of the Orthodox Church, declaring in 2016 that: "Honest interfaith dialogue contributes to the development of mutual trust and to the promotion of peace and reconciliation."

Another answer can be found in King Salman bin Abdulaziz Al Saud's statement during the last Janadriya festival: "This event captures Saudi Arabia's heritage and culture and reflects our shared desire to promote cross-cultural communication and achieve coexistence and tolerance between the peoples of the world based on shared human values".

Yet another answer can be found in the Athens Declaration calling upon people of goodwill to continue building bridges between communities to overcome distrust and alienation and to uphold the principle of common citizenship for all peoples and to support pluralism in our societies.

Our own personal response to these challenges is love, ἀγάπη. It has been recommended in the past that tolerance — tolerating each other — could help us achieve a peaceful coexistence and a common citizenship. But our conviction is that to merely bear one another emphasizes the pervasive goal of dominance. If one must tolerate another, the one being tolerated is viewed as less valuable than the one who tolerates. This is a great deception. We must move beyond tolerance to love. Love is much more than tolerance. When we embrace and welcome the Other with genuine concern and love — as if the Other is our very own neighbour — we have the foundation for creating lasting peace in the world. The Greek word for solidarity is ἀλληλεγγύη — coming close and becoming a neighbour to the Other. This is the essential message of the parable of the Good Samaritan; the reply that Jesus Christ gave to the question: "Who is my neighbour?" (Luke 10:29). Christ implied that, rather than asking who our neighbour is, we should instead become the neighbour to the Other (Luke 10: 37–38). When neighbours join together to seek the benefit of the Other, we begin to live in solidarity. This is the seed for broader, universal solidarity.

Love surpasses human capacity. It is a divine gift. Therefore, we strongly believe that to achieve it demands much more than our human, spontaneous response. It requires something much more than our simple will to follow God's invitation. It implies a lifelong and continuous response, a commitment through faith, prayer, and spiritual struggle. In other words, through religion.

It is our deep conviction that the contribution of religion is crucial to overcoming the worldwide crisis, given that religion is a great spiritual power deeply rooted in the human soul, affecting human minds and hearts, and granting spiritual orientation — a power that fosters, preserves and promotes high values, wisdom and peace. All of these qualities risk becoming lost through the increase of secularism, atheism and materialism, and also through the outburst of religious fundamentalism and violence in the name of God, which is the negation of the essence of authentic religious belief, and a dehumanizing principle. Fundamentalism definitely does not belong to the essence of religion, but rather "constitutes an expression of morbid religiosity" (Encyclical of the Holy and Great Council of the Orthodox Church, par. 17).

Consequently, religions must stand together before the increasing secularism and fundamentalism. This goal is supported and promoted through dialogue. Dialogue is a gesture of solidarity. Interreligious dialogue does not mean

a relativization of our own faith nor the weakening or even denial of our own religious identity, but rather it enriches identities and profoundly leads to a change of mindset and attitude towards the Other. It can heal prejudices and promote a spirit of solidarity and peace. In this sense, uniting people and bringing them closer, promotes the spiritual foundation of common citizenship and peaceful coexistence in the world. According to the Christian perspective, a human being is not only a "citizen of the world" but is also called to be a citizen of heaven (οὐρανοπολίτης) — for only then is the human being's innate thirst for eternity quenched. Far from diminishing our desire to strive for a better world, this call for eternal life effectively strengthens our capacity and will to work alongside us for dignity and peace on earth.

Therefore, our beloved, we beseech Almighty God to guide our deliberations and grant us wisdom to respond in creative ways with which we can save lives and promote freedom while moving human beings closer to each other and humanity closer to peace and solidarity. It is our prayer that God will allow us to see with His eyes our fellow human being — to see Him in our neighbour. May our Lord reward our efforts with a lasting peace and justice on earth and give us the peace from above which surpasses all understanding. We thank God and we thank you.

His All Holiness Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew Archbishop of Constantinople

After completing undergraduate studies at the Theological School of Halki, Istanbul, His All-Holiness pursued graduate studies at the Pontifical Oriental Institute of the Gregorian University in Rome, the Ecumenical Institute in Bossey, Switzerland, and the University of Munich. His doctoral dissertation was in the field of Canon Law, and he was one of the founders of the Society of Canon Law of the Oriental Churches.

Appointed to the diaconate in 1961 and to the priesthood in 1969, he served as Assistant Dean at the Theological School of Halki (1968–72) before becoming Personal Secretary to his predecessor, the late Ecumenical Patriarch Demetrios (1972–90). In 1973 he was elected Metropolitan of Philadelphia and, later in 1990, Metropolitan of Chalcedon.

HE Mr. Nassir Abdulaziz Al-Nasser

Speech given on behalf of Antonio Guterres, United Nations Secretary General

May peace and God's blessing be upon you. Your Holiness, Eminences, Excellencies, Ladies And Gentlemen — it gives me great pleasure to be participating in your meeting again. Today, I am wearing two hats — one, as a representative of the United Nations Secretary General, Mr. António Guterres, who could not participate in person due to prior commitments. He asked me to convey his support for your meeting and his best wishes for successful discussions. My second hat is my capacity as High Representative for the United Nations Alliance of Civilizations (UNAOC).

I recall the first time I met with HE Faisal bin Muaammar, back in February 2013 during the UNAOC Fifth Global Forum, hosted by the Austrian government here in the beautiful city of Vienna. Faisal explained to me the mission and

objectives of the newly created KAICIID. We agreed to collaborate, since we have common goals for fostering inter-religious dialogue and promoting tolerance and respect.

Then I had the honour to participate in your first high level meeting in 2014 and speak about the image of the Other and the context of international and intercultural education. Today, I would like to congratulate the KAICIID Secretary General and his capable team for the progress you have made and the milestones you have achieved in the short time since the organization's inception. The Centre has indeed established an impressive track record with events and consultations with religious leaders as well as thought leaders in Southeast Asia, Africa, and South America.

The theme of this high level meeting is certainly a timely one, placing the emphasis on interreligious dialogue as a



pathway to peace, and as a reminder to all of us of the vital and indispensable role that religious leaders play in the shaping of our world. Faith is, and will always be, central to hope and resilience, yet around the world we see how religion is

Mutual understanding and interreligious dialogue constitute important dimensions of the dialogue among civilizations and of the culture of peace

being hijacked by radical groups and twisted by intolerant ideologies to justify incitement to violence, discrimination, xenophobia, and acts of terrorism.

These ideologies seek to divide humanity, based on false versions and interpretation of religious, cultural and social values. No one can deny the short- and long-term damage caused by these factors on international peace and security, as well as on development. Together, we must counter such narratives. Allow me to recall the United Nations General Assembly Resolution 59/23 of 11 November 2004, which affirmed that mutual understanding and interreligious dialogue constitute important dimensions of the dialogue among civilizations and of the culture of peace.

In order to achieve sustainable peace — one that truly lasts and endures — it must be based, not only on nurturing a culture of tolerance, dialogue, solidarity, and mutual understanding, but also on a culture of prevention. Sustainable peace requires not only political will from all sides but also the collective efforts of the international community, civil society and, fundamentally, religious leaders.

We need to expand this peace in order that dialogue can be used effectively by local and regional leaders and other actors who have a voice of influence within their respective communities. As such, all of the world's major religions have reaffirmed their commitment to building peace and have emphasized the oneness of humanity in standing on the side of the marginalized and in working to resolve conflict.

In this context, the UNAOC is one of the UN's leading entities for the promotion of interfaith and intercultural dialogue. We recognize that peace cannot be attained

through the endeavours of politicians alone. For this reason we value the partnership and engagement of various players such as civil society groups, including those that are youth-led, and grassroots, as well as the private sector, academia and most religious leaders and faith based organizations.

We have reached out and worked closely with religious leaders since 2013. For the last five years more than 30 events involving religious leaders were organized or sponsored by the UNAOC, creating a global platform for dialogue among those essential actors. Before concluding, allow me to reiterate that words such as dialogue, reconciliation, and tolerance mean little if not supported by a concrete, broad range of actions performed under an international umbrella of sincere cooperation from both state and non-state actors.

After all, the qualities of peace, justice, human dignity and tolerance that we all aspire to are what bind us together, as we are all part of one humanity despite our many diverse cultures.

HE Mr. Nassir Abdulaziz Al-Nasser High Representative for the UNAOC

HE Mr. Nassir Abdulaziz Al-Nasser assumed the position of High Representative for the United Nations Alliance of Civilizations on March 1st, 2013. Prior to that, he was the President of the 66th session of the United Nations General Assembly from 2011 to 2012. A veteran diplomat, Mr. Al-Nasser held the rank of Minister, granted by His Highness the Emir of the State of Qatar from 1998 to 2011.

Mr. Al-Nasser has served as Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Qatar to the United Nations where he played leading roles as Chairman of the General Assembly's Special Political and Decolonization (Fourth) Committee from 2009 to 2010, and as President of the General Assembly High-level Committee on South-South Cooperation from 2007 to 2009. He also chaired the Group of 77 and China at the United Nations in New York in 2004, guiding the action that paved the way for the Second South Summit of the Group which took place the following year and led to the establishment of the South Fund for Development and Humanitarian Affairs, a financing mechanism aimed at assisting the countries of the Global South in addressing issues such as poverty, hunger and natural disasters.

HE Dr. Mohammad bin Abdul Karim Alissa

Your Excellencies, Eminences, and Distinguished Assembly — I am very happy to participate in this highly distinguished assembly and meeting. This gathering encompasses an elite group of intellectuals and important personalities from different religions and cultures, united here in the city of Vienna, the capital of beauty.

We all need to support peaceful coexistence with soft power so as to contribute towards a civilized society and fill the gaps in humanity. Our dear brothers and sisters are still suffering from these gaps today. The consequences of gaps in peaceful coexistence and social cohesion are costly,

affecting cooperation and even the security of future generations. This is why we have an ethical duty to act, because the further we are from such engagement the more we lose our rights and values.

When we observe and review the history of interreligious and intercultural conflicts we notice that everything is related to misunderstanding, ungrasped concepts, or a non-belief in the divine call to respect diversity and the freedom to choose. This explains why some violent extremists did not, or do not, even believe in the right to exist. Therefore we have to have a comprehensive approach so as to promote diversity and tolerance as forms of richness and creativity.



Unfortunately, violent extremists do not believe in this as a need for survival and the preservation of dignity.

History has witnessed painful examples of extreme violence and barbaric terror. When we understand the cultural and religious diversity of each other, we will reach a very high level of civilization and wisdom. We are speaking today on behalf of all Muslim people united under the Islamic nation. We affirm that Islam has honoured the freedom of belief since our Prophet, blessings and peace be upon him, said: "I have been sent as a messenger to convey morals."

We need to wisely protect our diverse ethnicities, knowing that they are a rich source of our cooperation, rather than a reason for exclusion

That's why we are very honoured and pleased to witness and attend such meetings, especially since humankind has suffered from intercultural, interreligious, political and sectarian conflicts which have generated an incomplete history that lacks ethical values. There is a huge lack of continuity from the great thinkers and intellectuals of old. We need to encourage a common understanding so as to preserve our history, civilization, and humankind without alienation and restriction, both personal and political.

Specific circumstances throughout history require specific laws that guarantee change and transformation, taking care to avoid those principles which were established in other eras and would no longer suit our world today. The prisoners of history, when talking about reforms and creativity, are unable to move forward. Whatever their sources, we need the wisdom that is lacking in many parts of the world. However, in order to be considered wise, we have to recognize the men and women who are known for upholding human rights. These are the individuals that should be honoured.

We need a better quality of life, which is based upon real humanity and real human values, in order to achieve ethical and social justice. It would be wonderful if such values could be included in all constitutions so that nations can refer to them whenever needed. However, unfortunately this is

not often the case because there are many people who are chasing the illusions that extremism offers them. This is a syndrome that leads individuals to blindly deny and withdraw from all human values. This is why we need to resort to constitutions, many of which currently lack ethical values. I would like to share an example of a recent conversation with a friend who told me that he had objected to a piece of legislation. When I asked him the reason he told me that it was because it was against our religious and spiritual values. So, I asked him why he did not include those values in the constitution so as to ensure their preservation.

The day we become aware that many individuals seek personal interests, is the day we will realize that we need to return to the true values in order to achieve the positive beatitude. Otherwise, we will again find ourselves in the midst of conflict, far away from the tenets of the divine teachings. Of course, we do not presume or pretend that all of us should have the same beliefs, the same constitution or laws. Our religion of Islam has taught us this and we acknowledge it.

However, we call upon everyone to uphold common human values, which are not specific to one particular religion or culture, but rather to our intrinsic human nature. This is how God created us and made us different from any other creature.

HE Dr. Mohammad Ibn Abdulkarim Alissa Secretary General, Muslim World League

HE Dr. Mohammad Ibn Abdulkarim Alissa holds a bachelor's degree in Comparative Islamic Jurisprudence and master's degree and PhD in Comparative Judicial Studies, and Studies in Common Law – Constitutional Law.

After having been appointed Vice President of the Court of Grievances in 2007, he became Minister of Justice in 2009; honorary President of the Judiciary, and Adviser at the Royal Court in 2012; General Supervisor at the Ideological Warfare Centre of the Ministry of Defence in 2015; General of the Muslim World League, and Chairman of the international Body of Muslim Scholars, and Senior Scholars Organization, Saudi Arabia in 2016. In 2017, he was assigned as General Supervisor of the King Salman Centre for International Peace, Malaysia.

It is for this reason, that we need to preserve our values in order to prevent the distortion of our humanity, and the eradication of human rights. Humankind will no longer enjoy prosperity or stability unless we all celebrate and preserve justice and shared values. As for religious or cultural differences, they are minor, despite the fact that each of us has his or her own religious beliefs, which we need to accept and understand.

In conclusion, I would like to highlight the high importance of interreligious and intercultural dialogue in order to combat extremism, fanaticism, bigotry and alienation. The only winner in those cases will also be the final loser. We must understand that the only task should be to work decently and honestly, as disclosed by the divine teachings which guarantee the prosperity and happiness of the people who abide by them. We should promote these values in the culture and civilization of all nations, which will prevent us from falling back into conflict,

Throughout history, religions, as a whole, have been innocent of any persecutions and wars that were falsely led in the name of religion. Instead, the parties responsible for those acts of violence are the individuals or groups who directly committed the acts. That is why our world needs to be further enlightened about justice, as much as it is already enlightened

and advanced at the technological level. The international community, under the umbrella of the United Nations, should be aware of the importance of educating others about justice and should implement meaningful, effective initiatives.

As advanced as our human intelligence is, we still suffer from many problems. This is why it is critical that we understand the real essence of humanity that is, according to our Lord, not to engage in violence against one another. For this purpose, we need to accept and respect each other's freedoms. We need to wisely protect our diverse ethnicities, knowing that they are a rich source of our cooperation, rather than a reason for exclusion.

If we do this, we will be very close to achieving happiness for all humankind, including those who increasingly suffer despite our advances in technology and science, as well as the existence and work of the United Nations. Finally, I would like to point out that by using only 10 per cent of our resources, we would be able to achieve peace worldwide.

If we understand these principles, we can more effectively use soft power to combat those ideologies which are serving non-human values and guarantee the freedom of belief. Finally, I would like to thank the organizers and thank all the distinguished assembly for their kind attention. May the peace of God be upon you.

We also need to encourage everyone to participate; not only academics and scholars but also religious leaders, societies and NGOs, among others. The OIC begins dialogue on a social basis.

I have spoken to many religious leaders and asked them to participate more effectively in standing up against the challenges of our times such as terrorism, war and extremism. I also spoke to the head of the Coptic Church and we agreed how important it is to deal with these challenges. I also spoke to Pope Francis about the actions taken to foster dialogue in different cultures and religions.

The OIC reaffirms that it, and all of its members, will work together with you to implement your project in order to improve living conditions, especially those in the OIC member states. One example of this is our partnerships in Thailand where we worked in Bangkok in December 2017. Furthermore, we hosted a workshop with many religious leaders and policymakers in South and Southeast Asia.

We also had other workshops in the Middle East and in

There is one principle — that the divine religions were given to people to make them happy not to let them suffer

HE Dr. Yousef Bin Ahmad Al-Othaimen

Your Excellencies, Your Eminences, Your Holinesses — may peace and God's blessings be upon you. It is a pleasure and an honour for me to express my gratitude and thanks to KAICIID for the organization of this very important conference, which will discuss one of the most important issues in our time: promoting peaceful coexistence and common citizenship.

I'd like to thank KAICIID for its everlasting efforts in building peaceful coexistence and for supporting dialogue between different nations and different peoples around the world, regardless of their religion. The Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), the second largest organization after the UN, contributes to, and participates in projects to foster dialogue between peoples and religions. The OIC

supports such projects regardless of their political or economic basis and without obstruction from the media.

The decision to establish this Religious Leaders' Platform parallels the ambition of the conferences created by the OIC and those of other Islamic organizations. Some institutions within the OIC also work on education, for instance the Islamic Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (ISESCO), because we believe that religion can nurture a fraternity for building respect and mutual understanding.

We have another institution, Sawt Al-Hikma (Voice of Wisdom), working to change strong preconceptions, reject stigmatization, and encourage peoples and cultures to speak to each other and understand one another, because there is one principle — that the divine religions were given to people to make them happy not to let them suffer.



other parts of Africa, designed to foster more cooperation. Finally, we have hosted a conference on promoting peaceful coexistence and common citizenship, and have agreed to cooperate more closely on those issues, especially in South-east Asia.

In addition, we played a very important role in resolving the conflict in the Central African Republic (CAR), ensuring that the elections took place, and using our influence, in particular with the Muslim parties there. We organized and participated in conferences in Bangalore (2014) and Senegal (2017) in order to promote improvements in democracy and coexistence, even between different countries. We also went back to the CAR and spoke to religious leaders again from all parties, in order to encourage them to implement the Freedom Agreements.

The OIC works on spreading the values of peace, fraternity, and respect. It is supported by the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and cooperates with the United Arab Emirates and its Centre for combating stigmatisation and segregation.

We need to thank all of these institutions — KAICIID,

centres in Saudi Arabia, centres in the United Arab Emirates, because they all play a part in bridging and building coexistence around the world.

Thank you again for this invitation. Thank you all for participating in this conference. May peace and God's grace be upon you.

HE Dr. Yousef Bin Ahmad Al-Othaimeen
Secretary General of the Organization of
Islamic Cooperation

HE Dr. Yousef Bin Ahmad Al-Othaimeen holds a BA in Social Studies from King Saud University in Riyadh in 1977. He also earned an MA in Political Sociology from Ohio University in 1982 and a PhD in Political Sociology from the American University in Washington DC in 1986.



Press conference with, from left, His Beatitude Patriarch Cardinal Mar Bashar Boutros Al-Ra'i, HE Faisal Bin Abdulrahman Bin Muaammar, HE Sheikh Dr. Shawki Ibrahim Allam



CHAPTER II

Religious Leaders' Platform

Mr. Fahad Abualnasr

Your Holiness, Your Eminences, Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen — I am very proud to say that KAICIID has been in the front line of promoting interreligious dialogue from the beginning. Since its foundation in 2012, the Centre has been advocating the importance of interreligious dialogue with its potential to enhance understanding, and to promote coexistence, justice, and peace. We see the considerable power of functioning dialogue platforms, which leaders from different religious traditions can use to advance values of common citizenship.

The Centre has solidified its role as a dialogue facilitator through working with local partners to build inclusive and sustainable platforms for interreligious dialogue, bringing

together religious leaders and institutions with international, governmental and civil society partners. We proudly support three interreligious dialogue platforms successfully operating in the Central African Republic, Myanmar and Nigeria.

Throughout this conference, you will hear from our partners. I am sure that they will be able to give you a better idea about our work together in their communities. Their stories of success are the reason that we do what we do.

We are gathered here to launch our fourth interreligious dialogue platform to facilitate cooperation among followers of different religions in the Arab world, putting religious leaders at the forefront. What makes the Interreligious Platform for Dialogue and Cooperation in the Arab World unique is that it is the first initiative of its kind. The



establishment of a formal body for interreligious collaboration in the Arab world, with a concrete strategy, plan, and defined common goals, has never happened before. We are making history, but it will mean nothing if we don't follow through our discussions with action.

Together, let us restore what has been damaged, let us take back religion from those who hijacked it

KAICIID's role is to facilitate dialogue and cooperation, but this platform initiative emerges from within your communities, and is designed for your communities — a collective effort, addressing a shared responsibility. We are here to support you in your implementation but, without all of you, this platform would never be possible. So I ask you, first and foremost, do you believe that this initiative can really make a difference to our world, and will it present a sustainable path to peace?

Can religious leaders commit to working together to implement the action plan under this platform? At KAICIID, we certainly believe so. I have hope for sustainable cooperation and for a better future. Together, let us restore what has been damaged, let us take back religion from those who hijacked it. Together we can demonstrate the true essence of any religion — peace, humanity, coexistence, and common citizenship.

Fahad Abualnasr KAICIID Director General

Fahad Abualnasr serves as Director General of KAICIID, in charge of proposing, developing and implementing new programmes and projects with the guidance of the Secretary General. He oversees the day-to-day operations of the Centre, as well as the strategic alignment and coordination of the organization.

Mr. Abualnasr led KAICIID through its first comprehensive exercise to define the 2016–2019 strategy plan and is responsible for ensuring its effective implementation. He has also been closely involved in the conceptualization and implementation of the Centre's flagship initiative "United against Violence in the Name of Religion".

In addition to his work at KAICIID, Mr. Abualnasr chaired the founding committee and successfully established the Al-Aghar Group, an independent think tank in Saudi Arabia. He is also on the Board of Directors of the i2Institute, established to support entrepreneurship and social innovation for scientists, technologists and engineers in the Middle East and beyond. He also managed the project titled "Building Saudi Arabia's National Innovation Ecosystem Framework", in close cooperation with KACST, the King Abdulaziz City for Science and Technology.

HB Cardinal Mar Béchara Boutros Al-Rai

I am pleased to participate in this international conference, and extend a sincere tribute to KAICIID's Secretary General, HE Faisal bin Abdulrahman bin Muaammar, thanking him for his kind invitation. I also salute all of the participants.

My speech today addresses the following theme: "The contribution of the Christian religion in combating violence,

in order to promote dialogue and coexistence — a theological approach".¹

The Christian faith asserts that violence in the name of God, or in the name of religion, is a true ideological deviation, contrary to the teaching of the Gospels. The Lord Jesus Christ left us an example in his suffering and death for the redemption of humankind. The Apostle Peter tells

us: “When he was insulted, he returned no insult; when he suffered, he did not threaten; instead, he handed himself over to the one who judges justly.” (1 Peter 2:23). Jesus bore the full brunt of human violence, delivering himself to it and facing its attempt to triumph over Him with love, forgiveness and redemption. Thus, religious violence has always been overpowered by love. From this point of view, there is no justification for violence, or for retaliation in the name of God, or for the salvation of people against their will because truth does not impose itself unless with the force of truth itself, which flows into the mind with efficiency and kindness.²

In this way, Christ illustrates a triangle, a symbol of the Trinity, in order that Christians should follow the footsteps of their saviour by spreading the culture of forgiveness and peace in the face of violence; by recognizing that the path of resurrection through Christ is through forgiveness and a courageous, steadfast faith, rather than through weakness;

and by abiding by the message of reconciliation that Christ has handed over to the Church to consolidate unity among the people.

Christianity has gone through many periods of discord and disloyalty to this evangelical teaching and mission, and has been misused in political violence because of the exploitation of the Christian religion for foreign purposes. This occurred when Christianity was a religion combined with an independent state. But when religion was separated from the state, according to the saying of Jesus Christ: “Repay to Caesar what belongs to Caesar and to God what belongs to God” (Mark 12:17), violence in the name of the Christian religion ceased.

The Lord of the Opponent says that the relationship between God and violence is quite clear in the Bible under the old covenant in the Old Testament which Christianity believes is also linked to and not separate from the New Testament.



However, the bond between these covenants is symbiotic so that “the Old Testament is revealed in the New Testament, and the New Testament is hidden in the Old”.³ But these dark pages must be interpreted in the context of salvation, which we find in the texts of the Old Testament. We read at the beginning of the letter to the Hebrews: “In times past, God spoke in partial and various ways to our ancestors through the prophets; in these last days, he spoke to us through a son, whom he made heir of all things and through

Religious violence has always been overpowered by love. From this point of view there is no justification for violence

whom he created the universe, who is the refulgence of his glory, the very imprint of his being, and who sustains all things by his mighty word.” (Heb. 1:1–3).

This means that heeding the words of God, in the history of the ancient people prior to Christ, requires careful reading. These people lived in environments that tainted religiosity with the effects of the conflicts of neighbouring religions. It was necessary through the words of the prophets to walk the people through a process of slow maturation, until a full, new maturity was reached in the person of Jesus Christ. So the culture of Christ was delivered to his church to be spread among the peoples.

Christianity never accepted the rejection of the sacred books of the Old Testament, and never considered that the God of that older revelation contradicted the tablets of Jesus Christ. The new Christianity cannot be founded on denying the above.

We are at a time when violence is practiced in the name of God and religion, despite this being against the very image and nature of God. In contemporary society, many people are under the misconception that monotheistic religions are inherently divisive because they have one god, who is jealous by nature and accepts no other god beside him (viz. Arthur Schopenhauer). In contrast, they believe pagan gods, are much more tolerant by nature and more likely to encourage diversity. Therefore modern culture calls for a “secularization of society” in order to put an end to violence and foster peace.

These misconceptions and negative opinions about religion stem from relativism, and the requirements of liberal democracy. Any behaviour that is linked to a comprehensive and absolute reality, like any religion, is considered a threat to civil peace.

History, however, reminds us of the violence practiced by the Selenian Hellenic kingdom against the Maccabees and the violent persecution of Christians by the pagan Roman empire over the first three centuries of Christian history. What, then, can we say about the new idolatry and systems today if they do not allow freedom of individual belief?

Today, political violence, fuelled by secularization, atheism, political ambition and economic strategies, is spreading. We see this violence in recent warfare, including those wars that have raged across the Middle East, the supply and trade of weapons, and the use of terrorist groups and mercenaries.

Now is an opportune time for action — what is known in Greek as *Kairos* — a real opportunity for the spirit, which gives us hope and provides the possibility for a better future. This future is built by the Christian faith on three basic tenets: The Oneness and Trinity of God: The Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit; the incarnation of the Son Jesus Christ, his pain and death for the redemption and justification of man; and the revelation of the Holy Spirit leading to the knowledge of the whole truth.

In light of this opportunity, the Church has turned the page of religious violence and planted a seed capable of producing fruit in us to renounce violence in the name of God, and stop the propagation of hatred, political racism and phobia of Islam.⁴

The “opportunity of the soul” is also found in the religion of Islam, which has had its image and essence distorted by terrorist organizations practicing violence and instilling terror in the name of God. Muslims are now taking advantage of this opportune time for action, declaring that Islam condones those who practice violence and terrorism in the name of God and the Islamic religion.

The Marrakesh Declaration on the Rights of Religious Minorities in the Muslim World was issued on January 27, 2016, on the occasion of the 1,400th anniversary of the *Al Madina* newspaper. At the conclusion of the meeting, which convened some 300 Muslim scholars from more than 120 countries, participants affirmed that: “crimes that are committed in the name of Islam and its legitimacy against religious minorities, killing, enslavement, displacement, intimidation and abuse of dignity are a slander against the Almighty and the Messenger of Mercy and the iniquities of

more than a billion people; their religion and reputation are stigmatized and distorted, and they are prone to the arrows of disgust and aversion and hatred, although they did not survive and were not spared from their woes.”

In the Al-Azhar Declaration of Citizenship and Coexistence, issued on 2 March 2017 at the International Conference of Azhar, we read: “Since the past decades of phenomena of extremism, violence and terrorism, which are being swept away by religion, and the pressures, intimidation, displacement, persecution and abduction of other religions and cultures in our societies, the Christian and Muslim communities proclaim that all religions are ignorant of terrorism in all its forms and condemn them most vigorously, and denounce them most strongly. They believe that the prosecution of Islam because of the criminal behaviour of some of its affiliates opens the door wide to describe all religions as terrorism. This is a justification for the contemporaries to say that religions must be eliminated under the pretext of the stability of societies.”

Today, as this international conference brings us together to launch the Regional Platform for Dialogue and Cooperation among Religious Leaders and Institutions in the Arab World, we are once again facing an opportunity of the soul. The awareness of the painful events that the Arab world has been going through for two decades has given rise to a real threat to the diversity of the social fabric, as well as a threat to peaceful coexistence and cohesion among the religious components of the region. With God’s will, we resolve to do

everything in our power to spare the peoples of the region from the scourge of war, extremism and violence, especially in the name of religion, and instil the values of dialogue, peaceful coexistence and shared citizenship.

We would like to thank God for this opportunity of the soul, hoping to put an end to the violence in the name of religion, in order to preserve the sanctity of God and each of our religious teachings.

**HB Cardinal Mar Béchara Boutros Al-Rai
Maronite Patriarch of Antioch and All the East
Head of Commission for Catholic Bishops of the
Middle East**

Cardinal Al-Ra’i is the 77th Maronite Patriarch of Antioch, and head of the Maronite Church, a position he has held since March 2011, succeeding Patriarch Nasrallah Boutros Sfeir.

Al-Ra’i received a PhD in canon and civil law in 1975. He also studied for three years at Lateran University, Rome. He was appointed Titular Bishop of Caesarea Philippi, and at 71, was elected Patriarch of the Maronite Church in 2011. He was made a Cardinal on 24 November 2012 by Pope Benedict XVI.

HE Sheikh Dr. Shawki Ibrahim Allam

All praise is due to God, Lord of the worlds, praise as befits the Glory of Your Face and the greatness of Your Might, and peace and blessings be upon the Prophet of mercy, Muhammad (peace and blessings be upon him), who was sent as a gift of mercy and guidance.

God the Almighty says: “And We have not sent you, O Muhammad, except as a mercy to the worlds”. And I bear witness that there is no deity but God and I bear witness that Muhammad is His Messenger and servant.

Dear distinguished guests, may the peace, mercy, and

blessings of God be upon you. It gives me great pleasure to meet with you in this blessed gathering, held under the umbrella of the International Dialogue Centre (KAICIID), to launch this platform of enormous importance and great moral and ethical value. It is an event that intends to provide a platform for regional dialogue so that religious leaders and institutions across the Arab and wider world are empowered to promote peaceful coexistence and common citizenship.

The fact is that we are in dire need of translating our common values and turning them into a tangible reality, especially after the dangerous increase of evil forces that

endeavour to fan the flames of conflict, sectarianism, and terrorism and rob us all of our God given dignity.

God the Almighty has made diversity in His creation. He has determined man to have different colours, languages, religions, and perceptions as He says in the holy Qur’an: “But they will not cease to differ except whom your Lord has given mercy, and for that He created them” (Qur’an 11:118–9).

Whoever is able to fathom the divine wisdom of this diversity will be able to understand God’s command to respect all humankind, confirmed and affirmed in the words of the Messenger of God (peace and blessings be upon him) who said: “None of you truly believes until he loves for his brother what he loves for himself.”

When we say that the message of Islam is universal, we mean that it is a message that means to engage every person. The message of Islam is not limited to the borders of Mecca or to the Arabs, but is general to all peoples and places. God

the Almighty says: “Blessed is He who sent down the criterion (i.e. the Qur’an) to His slave (i.e. Muhammad) that he may be a warner to the worlds” (Qur’an 25:1).

The early Muslims were able, through the universality of their message, to engage with other civilizations and nations embracing a diversity of cultures and different religions and norms. The Muslims epitomized the universal message of the Qur’an that includes verses such as: “We have not sent you but as a bearer of glad news and warner to the whole of humankind” (Qur’an 34:28), and prophetic traditions such as “God the Almighty has sent me as a mercy to all humankind.”

Islam has established rules and principles for coexistence with followers of different faiths in various contexts, times, and places, allowing Muslims to integrate and live in perfect harmony with the societies in which they reside. God the Almighty has even made this a fundamental precept for cooperation and interaction with others. He says: “God



does not forbid you from those who do not fight you because of religion and do not expel you from your homes — from being righteous toward them and acting justly toward them. Indeed, God loves those who act justly” (Qur’an 60:8).

God the Almighty has spoken the truth when He said, “There has certainly been for you in the Messenger of God an excellent example for anyone whose hope is God and the Last Day and [who] remembers God often” (Qur’an 33:21).

The Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) and his companions demonstrate the most refined practical application of peaceful coexistence, manifesting the justice and tolerance of Islam in dealing with people of other faiths.

All of our religions call upon us to love our neighbours, whether they live next door, in neighbouring countries, or are simply our neighbours in humanity. Similarly, all religions call upon individuals to respect the rights of their neighbours and defend them against aggression. This is the Sunnah of Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings be upon him) who said: “Exchange greetings of peace, feed people, [prostrate] in prayer when others are asleep and you will enter paradise in peace.”

This was the Prophet’s first message when he entered Madinah after emigrating from Mecca. At the same time, he strictly warned against inflicting harm to neighbours — so great is the right of a neighbour that the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) considered anyone who harms his neighbour stripped of his faith. He said: “By God, he is not a believer. By God, he is not a believer. By God, he is not a believer.” The companions asked him: “Who is that, O

It is our hope that this great dialogue initiative will go beyond conference walls to help the public understand the nuances of religious principles and fathom the divine wisdom behind religious diversity

Messenger of God?” He said, “The person whose neighbour does not feel safe from his evil.”

Honourable guests, the world is in dire need of dialogue platforms based on firmly established principles. We need a dialogue that respects our contexts and does not seek to stir animosity, hatred or impose hegemony over one another.

We need a dialogue that is based upon religious plurality and cultural diversity. Under no circumstances should dialogue be unilateral; rather, it should promote rapport and build bridges of understanding and cooperation in fulfilment with the will of command of God the Almighty. God created different nations and tribes so that they might know each other as per His words: “O humankind, indeed We have created you from male and female and made you peoples and tribes that you may know one another. Indeed, the most noble of you in the sight of God is the most righteous of you. Indeed, God is knowing and acquainted” (Qur’an 49:13).

We are striving hard to create this kind of dialogue that goes beyond closed rooms and to build bridges of understanding among nations and followers of different religions. It is our hope that this great dialogue initiative will go beyond the walls of conferences to help the public understand the nuances of religious principles and fathom the divine wisdom behind religious diversity, consequently allowing them to counter evil-mongers anywhere in the world.

As the head of a great religious institution, Egypt’s *Dar al-Ifta*, it gives me great pleasure to take part in this event. I am full of pride and confidence that I follow in the footsteps of the previous scholars of the noble Azhar and muftis who have established the means for promoting religious dialogue and coexistence. The *Dar al-Ifta* was keen to translate these values into something tangible through its events, fatwas, statements, initiatives and its international conferences.

There is no doubt that, in order to reap the fruits of these

**HE Sheikh Dr. Shawki Ibrahim Allam
Grand Mufti of Egypt**

Dr. Allam is the 19th Grand Mufti of Egypt. In February 2013, he was elected by Al-Azhar’s Council of Senior Scholars, headed by Sheikh Ahmad Al-Tayeb. Allam is also a professor of Islamic jurisprudence and law at the Al-Azhar University, and has written more than 25 works, many of which address issues pertaining to women. He received his PhD in 1996 from the Al-Azhar University in Jurisprudence and Sharia law and served as chairman of the Department of Jurisprudence at the School of Sharia at Al-Azhar University’s Tanta branch.

various initiatives and good intentions, these values must be included in educational curricula and adopted by each family as well as entire societies, including governmental and civil institutions. We must never forget that we are fully responsible for securing a bright and hopeful future for the coming generations who have no share in the blame for the conflicts and wars that have occurred in the past. It is our responsibility to create the opportunity to build a safe, peaceful, and stable future for new generations.

I sincerely pray to God that He grants you success in completing your work so that it may contribute toward fostering trust among the people. I also pray that your work will be a translation of a serious and refined dialogue based on religious plurality and cultural diversity — a dialogue that merges word and deeds. God the Almighty is our helper and the One who grants success.

Thank you for your kind attention. May God’s peace, mercy, and blessings be upon you

HE Sheikh Abdul Latif Derian

Dear brothers and sisters. I will not give a lecture or present you with academic research. I will shorten my words on the one subject that I think is very important. This is the essence of the great experience that has swept through the Middle East, the lessons we have learnt from it, and the future goals we are looking for. I will identify these in the following points:

We realise that the triumph of evil needs no more than people to stand idly by, to be indifferent to what is happening

First: extremism in the name of religion has not just fallen on us, like burning meteors fall from space. It was locally produced. Therefore, ignoring it does not eliminate it, disregarding it does not kill it, and diminishing its importance, does not mean that it is unimportant. The danger of it is devastating.

Second: extremism is like cancerous tumour, malignant and spreading. If we do not uproot it from the beginning, it will become increasingly ruthless, brutal and widespread. It is a deadly epidemic, if you do not kill it, it will kill you.

Third: not everyone who claims to fight extremism is sincere. Extremism is exploited and employed in some projects

and schemes that appear to be legitimate. Extremism is like wildfire, easy to start and quick to spread.

Fourth: extremism is not found in the building of mosques. Rather, extremism is destructive to mosques and to the peaceful believers who worship within them.

Fifth: extremism strives for the annihilation of the Other. However, the Other is not just someone from another religion, but might also be someone from the same religion. Extremism leaves us no choice other than to eliminate heterodoxy. Allah Almighty created us all different. We wanted to be different, and the Almighty alone governs us on the Day of Resurrection, while we are still different. This means that freedom of conscience is guaranteed in Islam, together with freedom of faith, and believers adhere to these freedoms by

**HE Sheikh Abdul Latif Derian
Grand Mufti of Lebanon**

Sheikh Derian has been the Grand Mufti of Lebanon since 2014. As spiritual leader of Lebanese Muslims, the Grand Mufti holds the highest religious post for a Sunni Islamic scholar in Lebanon.

Derian received his religious studies at the Azhar University in Lebanon. He then earned two degrees in Islamic religion and Sharia from the Islamic University at Medina in Saudi Arabia before going on to continue his graduate studies.

upholding this doctrine in both letter and spirit.

Sixth: we have learned from our bitter and painful experiences. We — Muslims, Christians, and all other denominations from all of the Churches — are united as one. Because we have built our civilization together, we are able to build our future together too, and the better future to which we all aspire is based simply on our unity and on the interlocking of our arms.

Seventh: the building of this desired future begins with the reconstruction of the present. The foundations of the present need to be based on the adoption of the principles of common citizenship, which means equal rights and duties, and respect for freedoms, primarily religious freedoms.

Eighth: we acknowledge with sorrow and pain the criminal acts of terrorism that have shattered mutual trust in our societies, although only temporarily. While we acknowledge that terrorists have planted fear into the foundations of our society, we are working together to remove the wedges between us and to dispel those fears, and we are succeeding, to the praise of Allah and his favour. Moreover, we are uniting under the shared belief that terrorism victimises all of us, and that all religions are innocent of its crimes. Therefore, we must join together to eliminate it and establish a society of love and peace.

Ninth: our Lebanese experience of living together, although not yet completely and ideally achieved, still



deserves to be followed and replicated. The national unity between Muslims and Christians has closed the gaps that could have been filled by terrorist extremism in Lebanon. This unified society of religious groups and actors, in coordination with the state, have ensured that the vulnerable and oppressed are protected from violence, and are given food and basic necessities. We are still continuing to do this.

Tenth: we cannot truly enjoy freedom while our fellow brothers and sisters are still suffering. We cannot live in peace and certainty while fear engulfs communities in our immediate vicinity and around the world. We realize that the triumph of evil needs nothing more than for people to

stand idly by, indifferent to what is happening.

Experience has taught us that defending our human dignity, our rights and our freedoms begins with defending everyone's human dignity, rights and freedoms. All humanity is the same family.

Finally, I would like to pay a heartfelt tribute to the International Dialogue Centre (KAICIID) for its constructive efforts in helping Muslims and Christians in the Middle East, Asia and Africa to build bridges of understanding and cooperation. It is the noblest task in the world and one that humanity is in need of.

Peace, mercy and blessings of Allah upon you.

HH Catholicos Aram I Keshishian

Dear brothers and sisters — in the face of growing tensions, sensitivities and polarization in our region, the launch of this platform of religious leaders and institutions, aimed at deepening peaceful coexistence, is indeed an urgent imperative. Therefore, I warmly welcome KAICIID's initiative, which will undoubtedly further interreligious dialogue and broaden the scope of our joint activities.

In fact, our common humanity, our common ethical values and our common citizenship should become the firm foundations of this platform. Furthermore, I believe that the following points should become the guiding principles of this initiative. Let me briefly highlight these six points.

We don't practice dialogue in Lebanon, we live dialogue. It is part of the quality of life

First — deepening our shared values, developing a common ethical framework from which to adopt common positions and strategies with respect to the issues and concerns facing our societies, is possible and necessary. Our coexistence will

remain shaky if it is not undergirded by shared values.

Second — promoting tolerance. Deepening our shared values will distance our religions from exclusive claims and fundamentalist tendencies. It will also protect them from the abuse and misuse of ethical values, religious beliefs, traditions and symbols. Indeed, only by giving tangible articulation to the spirit of tolerance, mutual respect and acceptance, can we overcome fear and distrust and build a peaceful and harmonious coexistence.

Third — building mutual trust. In spite of growing Christian-Muslim dialogue, the misconceptions, stereotypes and biased attitudes about each other still prevail. Mutual knowledge promotes mutual understanding and common responsibility, and builds mutual trust which is a core value underpinning and enhancing the coexistence of the communities in our region. We can build mutual trust by respecting each other's teachings, symbols and traditions and by engaging our people in education and the process of building awareness.

Fourth — fostering common belonging. Muslims and Christians are challenged to move beyond good neighbourly relations to give concrete manifestations to their common belonging as co-citizens. Common citizenship supposes equal responsibilities, equal obligations, equal rights as well as full participation in all domains and at all levels of society.

Fifth — overcoming violence. Violence, in all of its forms and expressions, has become a dominant feature of

contemporary societies. How should we respond in our region to this life-threatening evil? The role of religious leaders could be, in my judgement, threefold:

- ❖ Violence prevention. Common citizenship embraces and provides ample space for creative interaction between our common values and diversity, thus preventing the rise of fundamentalism, exclusiveness and violence.
- ❖ Conflict resolution. Religious leaders can play a significant role in resolving conflicts through mediation and moderation.
- ❖ Peacebuilding, which is of crucial importance in preventing and combating violence. Peacebuilding presupposes the promotion of justice.

Sixth — strengthening religious moral authority. When a religion does not partake of peacebuilding, it is part of the

problem, as it is not being faithful to its true teachings and genuine vocation. It is of vital importance, therefore, for a religion to remain faithful to its vocation, then it becomes a trustful instrument in peacebuilding.

The greatest power of religion is its moral authority. Religion should not identify itself with any political agenda or ideological orientation. Religion is called, with its moral authority and prophetic role, to perceive and implement its unique mission as an initiator, facilitator, encourager, reconciler and leader of all efforts aimed at conflict prevention and resolution.

Seventh — transforming coexistence into living together. Christians and Muslims do not merely coexist, side-by-side as two separate blocks. They live together as neighbours, as partners, as co-citizens sharing common concerns, facing common challenges and striving for common futures. We can strengthen living together as a broader community



HH Catholicos Aram I Keshishian
Head of the Catholicosate of the Great House of Cilicia

His Holiness Catholicos Aram I studied at the Armenian Theological Seminary, Antelias, Lebanon and the Ecumenical Institute of Bossey, Geneva, Switzerland. He received his M.Div. from the Near East School of Theology, his S.T.M. jointly from the American University of Beirut and Near East School of Theology, and his PhD from Fordham University in New York. He also holds several honorary degrees. His major areas of specialization are philosophy, systematic theology, and Near Eastern church history.

of coherent diversity by initiating joint programmes and people-oriented action projects. We can also do this by remaining faithful to our God-given message and moving people from isolation to integration, from exclusion to participation and from reaction to interaction.

Lebanon, where I come from, is an excellent example of what it means to live together. We don't practice dialogue in Lebanon, we live dialogue. It is part of the quality of life. We cannot imagine Lebanon, and our togetherness, without this quality of life that unites us and preserves our diversity.

In conclusion, if this platform initiated by KAICIID is based on and driven by shared values and common citizenship; if plurality and diversity are perceived as complementing and enriching, rather than polarizing; if our reflections and actions are not determined by geopolitical considerations; then, with this strategy and objective, we can make a significant contribution to conflict prevention, resolution and peacebuilding efforts in our part of the world.

Our dialogue must be, in my humble opinion, existential in nature — that is to say grassroots oriented, realistic in approach and contextual in its agenda. We must avoid absolutism, and affirm those points of convergence that are part of our religions.

We must respect the specificities, strengths and commonalities. We must reject the culture of fear, mistrust, alienation and confrontation, and promote a culture of hope, mutual understanding and peaceful and coherent coexistence. Here is the challenge before us, let's face this challenge with a profound sense of common responsibility.

HE Sheikh Saleh bin Abdullah bin Hamid

In the name of God, the most gracious, most merciful. Praise be to God the Cherisher and Sustainer of the World. May God send blessings and peace upon all his prophets, messengers, and righteous servants.

First of all, I would like to thank my dear friend and brother, HE Secretary General Muaammar, for his kind invitation to this honourable and distinguished meeting, which has such noble objectives. Our meeting today has been preceded by other successful meetings, and we are confident that success will be the outcome of this gathering, too.

I welcome you to this international assembly which has a very important focus — promoting peaceful coexistence and respecting diversity, which is part of the responsibility of common citizenship. This meeting aims to achieve

important objectives in order to shed light on the value of common religious principles such as tolerance, mercy, forgiveness, respect for diversity, and the rejection of racism and fanaticism.

Our prophet, may the peace of God be upon him, has always confirmed, through concrete examples, that our religion of Islam guarantees rights to both Muslims and non-Muslims. All individuals have rights and duties, and this was made clear in the Prophet's message in Medina. During this trip, the Prophet said some of the most beautiful words I have heard, also pertinent to this meeting, which declare that one of the aims of the Hijra of the Prophet is to create unity and establish the state.

Unity, therefore, has always been one of the main objectives. We know that, following migration, migrant groups become



*The Interreligious Platform for Dialogue and Cooperation in the Arab World.
Pictured from left: Prof. Dr. Hichem Grissa, HE Metropolitan Isaac Barakat, Judge Sheikh Ghandi Makarem,
Rev. Dr Andrea Zaki, HE Sayed Ali El-Amine, HE Sheikh Muhammad Hussein, His Grace Bishop Marcos,
HE Secretary General Faisal Bin Abdulrahman Bin Muaammar, HE Sheikh Saleh bin Abdullah bin Hamid,
HH Catholicos Aram I Keshishian, HE Sheikh Abdul Latif Derian, HE Sheikh Dr. Shawki Ibrahim Allam*

diversified as they spread across the world and become a diaspora. This includes Jews, Muslims, and many other migrants from numerous religious and ethnic groups. When a scientist or scholar considers the idea of unity, its definition should be founded on diversity — whether that diversity is religious, ethnic or any other type that comprises humankind.

This concept also applies to the state because the state has a responsibility to encompass those diverse citizens that have migrated into it. I reiterate that, when the Prophet (Peace be Upon Him) spoke about migration, his objectives were unity and statehood — objectives that model the first ever comprehensive and almost perfect constitution.

The Prophet's (PBUH) biography is filled with examples that showcase the peacefulness of our religion and the importance placed on noble human values such as the strengthening of dialogue, and peaceful coexistence between citizens from all states, as well as building strong relationships with neighbouring countries through diverse agreements.

This heavenly message aims mainly to preserve human diversity and to honour God in order to achieve happiness and peace for all humankind. This is why God said that humankind has been created differently from all other creatures, being elevated above them. This is why humankind should preserve all values, whether religious or otherwise, to which purpose God reminded the sons of Israel that they should understand the killing of one human being to be like killing the whole of humanity.

Islam has never been interested only in Muslims, but rather in all of humankind, because we care, and Islam cares, for the interests and the good of each individual, based on the five pillars.

I affirm that our religion is based on mercy, justice, respect. It is especially grounded on respect of the general system of the state and the cultural and religious identities of all humankind in relation to ethical legislation and rules. However, unfortunately in our era, we have suffered conflicts in different parts of the world, but mainly in the Middle East. These conflicts are related to a conflict of interest.

Some extremist groups have misused religion for their personal, evil interests against all ethical norms and religious values. However, religions have nothing to do with those crimes and those fanatic and extremist groups for which killing has become a legal and daily act based upon evil and violence. The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia has long endured the evil acts of those evil people, which is why we have, and we are still, making every effort required of us to establish and promote dialogue.

Dialogue is one of our main objectives. This is why we have created a national centre for dialogue — which has become an international centre for dialogue — so as to enable each individual to enjoy a decent life under the umbrella of human diversity and coexistence for the common good and for the protection of all against extremism and violence. For this purpose, we rely significantly on the role of religious leaders. I would like to reiterate that KAICIID is under the patronage and protection of our kingdom in addition to that of the Kingdom of Spain, the Holy See, and the Republic of Austria.

We need innovative solutions to eradicate violence and extremism for the first time in our history, and the International Dialogue Centre together with the United Nations are at the forefront of that change

My country has always stated that our religion, and all religions, have nothing to do with the bloody deviation of extremist groups that commit horrific crimes of destruction through terrorist attacks in any form. With the support of the Guardian of the Two Holy Mosques, His Majesty the King and the Crown Prince, we have made huge efforts to reject these actions and to combat violence and extremism, and to reject terrorism through local, regional and international organizations including KAICIID. Given these circumstances of extremist and evil thoughts that are threatening the common good, it is unacceptable for anyone, particularly those in leadership positions, to stand aside without acting. We need to work to restore coexistence, peace, and stability, and to defend religions so as to promote their true roles.

One of the major threats faced by religious groups is of their sons being falsely mobilized by destructive and extremist teachings. These young people are often not mature enough to realize that they are being exploited as instruments of destruction rather than instruments of the word of God.



You, ladies and gentlemen, are leaders. We are gathered here as individuals, activists, and political and religious leaders, with the help of God and the noble and religious values that have clearly been inspired by the ideals of peaceful coexistence, justice, peace, generosity and common citizenship.

Hence, the importance of raising awareness against fake or erroneous thoughts about religion that allow some to commit horrible acts in its name. Therefore, I would like to praise the many efforts made by KAICIID, and I wish the Dialogue Centre every success in its endeavour to support peaceful coexistence and common citizenship — support that is evidenced by inviting all of these highly distinguished people to participate in these discussions and to exchange experiences. The launching of the campaign, United Against Violence in the Name of Religion, is especially significant in addition to many other important initiatives that constitute a quality and quantum leap in contributions to enhance dialogue and peace.

We have a duty to combine our common tasks so as to send a message of peace and peaceful citizenship to the

entire world, and to implement all of those common values on the ground so as to achieve peace for all humanity, and peaceful coexistence and positive exchange and interaction between all civilizations, religions and cultures.

**HE Sheikh Saleh bin Abdullah bin Hamid
Grand Imam of the Great Mosque of Mecca**

His Excellency is a former President of the Saudi Shura Council and former Chairman of the Supreme Judiciary Council, and is also a member of the Arabic Language Academy, Mecca. In 2016 he won the Service to Islam award from the King Faisal International Prize. Presently, His Excellency serves as Adviser to the Royal Court. He has authored more than 10 publications on Islamic studies.

We need to create many platforms from which to combat the killing of innocent people, to fight all threats against peaceful coexistence in the world, to protect young people from destructive thoughts of extremism and fanaticism, which pave the way for further terrorist attacks and threats to worldwide security. Therefore, there is an urgent need for religious, scientific and cultural education, as well as efficient communication to implement a worldwide strategy to eradicate the violence that generates genocides and other mass killings.

We need innovative solutions to eradicate violence and extremism for the first time in our history, and the International Dialogue Centre together with the United Nations are at

the forefront of that change, with their hundreds of members from various parts of the world. These actors work to support our shared values, coordinate efforts, and address the challenges facing Arab societies at national, regional and international levels in order to achieve global development goals.

To close, I would like to say that we, as religious and political leaders, are expected to lead our communities forward in the right way, helping others to overcome challenges and threats and move towards a better world and a brighter future.

Thank you. Blessings, once again and thanks to the KAI-CIID and all the organizers and may God protect you and help you succeed in your endeavour.

His Grace Bishop Antonious Marcos

Speech given on behalf of His Holiness Pope Tawadros II, Pope of the Coptic Orthodox Church of Alexandria

In the name of God who loved humanity before creating it and who allowed people to worship their gods in the way that they wished. I'd like to thank God. I would also like to thank the organizers of this very important conference and I wish that it may be fruitful for the whole world. And please allow me to convey the greetings of holy Pope Tawadros II.

With regard to peace: Once there was a time when the Jews did not get along with each other, especially when facing opposition either as a nation or within their own tribe. However, when Jesus Christ was born, the angels came down from heaven to tell the people to seek peace. The angels meant that all humankind should live in peace with one another, not just one particular ethnic or religious group.

Jesus said that respect is due to those who have found peace. He spoke about founding a community of peace, and prayed for love even on behalf of those who defamed or attacked him. He also said: "Whenever you enter a house, greet everyone with the word 'salaam' — greet them with the word 'peace'."

Jesus called regularly for peace and his main principle was to establish peaceful coexistence in all parts of the world. In his last days, Jesus told his disciples: "I leave my peace with you. Please spread and disseminate it. Carry it to each village and town you go to."

Jesus also spoke about the respect for the Other. We all know the story of the Good Samaritan, who tended to someone whom he had never met before. Jesus said that it's not important which religion a person belongs to; however it is important that each person is treated as a neighbour and friend. In another story, Jesus met a Samaritan woman at a well. Although she was not one of his followers, she asked for

His Grace Bishop Antonious Marcos Coptic Orthodox Bishop for the Diocese of Shoubra

His Grace Bishop Antonious Marcos began his first mission serving in a small village near Cairo. In 1966 he was blessed by His Holiness Pope Kyrillos VI and, for the next ten years, he served the people of Ethiopia. In early 1976 His Holiness Pope Shenouda III blessed and sent the monk, now Father Antonious, to start full time missionary work in Kenya. On the Feast of Pentecost, June 12 1976, he was ordained Bishop Antonious Marcos, Bishop of African Affairs. He has established over 35 churches in 10 African countries.

certain things and he gave them to her. He also cured another woman's son, even though she, too, was not one of his followers.

Jesus performed many deeds, all of which exemplify the need for everyone to pray to his/her own God, as well as to live in peace with each other. He gave us many excellent examples of this peaceful coexistence — even when people persecuted him, he still asked God to pardon them. In the same way, if we see that others are on the wrong path, we should pray and ask God to help them return to the right one.

Many churches have schools and hospitals. In the schools, children live together as brothers and sisters without considering each other's religions. In the hospitals, people are

treated in the same room as others from different religions.

Moreover, we have Christian TV channels that concentrate only on dialogue in order to foster a more fruitful coexistence. It was the suggestion of Pope Tawadros II to launch a children's TV channel to help them understand, from their earliest years, that they need to live together, without looking at each other's religions. The channel is named Koogi, which is the Coptic expression for 'little one' or 'little darling'.

We also have our religious books, the story of Jesus Christ, and numerous sayings in Christianity and in Islam that stress the fact that evil people would not use the words 'Islam' or 'Salaam'. But, if people live in peaceful coexistence, they carry good in their hearts.

I wish you all a fruitful conference and pray that God will grant us all success. Each one of us will go home to their community, where we will have the opportunity to meet with new people and spread the message of peace. Those people may then spread these ideas further, in which case societies will live in peace, with love for one another. May God grant us peaceful coexistence. Amen.

Children live together as brothers and sisters in school without considering each other's religions



HE Sheikh Muhammad Hussein

Praise be to Allah, the Lord of the Worlds, and I bear witness that there is no Allah but Allah, the Righteous, and I bear witness that Muhammad is the Seal of the Prophets and Messengers, peace be upon him and them and his companions.

Differences between people are a reality of life, whether they are born with these differences or choose them later on. Allah created people with different colours, races, languages, and minds, and made it a sign of His greatness and almighty ability. He said: "And among His Signs is the creation of the heavens and the earth, and the variations in your languages and your colours: verily in that are Signs for those who know."¹

Here, the acknowledgement of human diversity — black and white, Arab and non-Arab, educated and uneducated — is clear. Islamic Sharia forbids this difference to lead to divergence between different types of people.

People are also different in their own choice of beliefs, ideas, methods and behaviour, but coexistence is nevertheless possible. Allah sent messengers, peace be upon them, with books sealed with the message of Islam. This needs to be taken into consideration when dealing with followers of other religions or issues. Allah lays the foundation for this when He says: "To each among you, we have prescribed a law and an open way. If Allah had so willed, He would have made you a single people."²

Allah does not want to eliminate the diversity between human beings or the multiplicity of doctrines and orientations. Difference within creation is inevitable and has resulted in a variety of people with different doctrines. The Almighty says: "It is He who has created you; and of you are some that are non-believers, and some that are believers: and Allah sees well all that ye do."³ If Allah wants to give victory to some and not others, or even to get rid of his opponents, the Almighty says: "We can change their likenesses with [complete] alteration."⁴

One of the considerations in dealing with the difference between the religions is that no one is forced to change their doctrine and belief. Anyone who forcibly denies the freedom of belief, opting instead for coercive oppression, leads us away from the real guidance and the real goal. This is contrary to the values and principles of Islam, since Allah Almighty forbade coercion in religion when he said: There shall be no compulsion in [acceptance of] religion. The right course has become clear from the wrong."⁵

Allah, the Almighty sends His Messenger, peace and blessings be upon him, to say to non-Muslims who refuse to belong to his religion: "Say, O non-believers, I do not worship what you worship. Nor are you worshippers of what I worship. Nor will I be a worshipper of what you worship. Nor will you be worshippers of what I worship. For you is your religion, and for me is my religion."⁶

Other verses confirm that the differences between people in their beliefs and laws fall within the will of Allah: "And if your Lord had willed, He could have made humankind one community; but they will not cease to differ."⁷ And the Almighty also says: "but to Allah belongs the affair entirely. Then have those who believed not accepted that had Allah willed, He would have guided the people, all of them?"⁸

Since pluralism of belief is inevitable, people should deal with this issue from this point of view. Allah Almighty says: "And say, the truth is from your Lord, so whoever wills, let him believe; and whoever wills, let him disbelieve."⁹

Islam does not only provide freedom for followers of other religions, but also righteousness and kindness to them. The Almighty says: "Allah does not forbid you, from those who do not fight you because of religion and do not expel

The maintenance of freedom and diversity is a collective responsibility, but it is primarily an obligation of the state, because they have the power to impose public order and to administer the law

you from your homes, from being righteous towards them and acting justly towards them. Indeed, Allah loves those who act justly. Allah only forbids you from those who fight you because of religion and expel you from your homes and aid in your expulsion. And whoever makes allies of them,



then it is them who are the wrongdoers."¹⁰

There is no doubt that the maintenance of freedom and diversity is a collective responsibility, but it is primarily an obligation of the state, because it has the power to impose public order and to administer the law.

The Commander of the Faithful, Ali bin Abi Talib, may Allah be pleased with him, wrote during one of the eloquent epochs, in the reign of Malik al-Ashtar al-Naqa'i, describing the features of piety and the policy of the king: "...Make your heart feel the mercy of the flock, and love them, and their kindness, and do not be harmful, seize their food, they are classified, either your brother in religion or the equivalent of you and exposed to the ills, and comes on their hands in the will and error, I will give them of your disbelief and your words like the one who loves to give you Allah from His forgiveness, then you are above them, and the ruler of them is above you, and Allah is above you and you, and your commandment has satisfied them, and you possess them,

and do not entice yourself to the war of Allah."¹¹

In order to uphold these tenets, governments and authorities should safeguard freedom and diversity through:

- ❖ The enactment of clear laws that safeguard freedoms, protect diversity and conform to Islamic laws.
- ❖ Accountability for the oppressors of freedoms and diversity, and working to lift the injustice of the groups whose freedoms are being persecuted.
- ❖ Fighting extreme ideas.
- ❖ Spreading a culture of diversity and safeguarding freedoms through various media platforms.
- ❖ Inclusion of the values of freedom and diversity in educational curricula.
- ❖ Helping religious institutions spread the principles of freedom and diversity.

These are the views of the various Islamic aspects of freedom and diversity, stressing that differences between people are

inevitable, and that Islam does not ask Muslims to be isolated from others but to coexist with others and partake in dialogue with opponents. This does not mean that one should display a negative attitude in the face of good values and behaviour.

**HE Sheikh Muhammad Hussein
Grand Mufti of Jerusalem and Palestine**

His Excellency has served as Grand Mufti of Jerusalem since July 2006. Prior to becoming Grand Mufti of Jerusalem, Hussein was the manager and imam of the Al-Aqsa Mosque, the highest religious official in the Palestinian Authority.

A negative attitude may have consequences within the community which, if spread, like fire, may extend further. The Prophet, peace be upon him, warned of this trend in when he said; “The likeness of the man who observes the limits prescribed by Allah, and that of the man who transgresses them, is that of people who board a ship after casting lots. Some of them arrive on its lower deck and some of them on its upper. Those who, on the lower deck, require water, go to the occupants of the upper deck and say to them: ‘If we make a hole in the bottom of the ship, we shall not harm you.’ Now, if the occupants of the upper deck leave them to carry out their design they will all be drowned. But if they do not let them go ahead with their plan, all of them will remain safe”.¹²

I wish this honourable gathering success in promoting and supporting informed dialogue among followers of religions, for the peace of all humankind.

HE Sayed Ali El-Amine

There is no doubt that the phenomenon of extremism and terrorism found in the Arab world, and which has spread in many other countries, has become a global threat to the relations of nations and their peoples, and to their continuity and coexistence in their respective societies and countries. Often, there are cultural aspects that align with the religious fanaticism of extremist groups who try to exploit religion to incite enmity and hatred between followers of different religions and cultures.

Terrorism is the act of groups, parties and governments that do not represent religions or communities. They are groups outside international and Sharia law, with their criminal and aggressive actions, and are outside the values and beliefs of their own people. They represent only themselves and their followers with their brutal acts aimed at power, domination, and coercion.

Organised terrorism, and the groups and countries that support it, pose the biggest threat to the stability and sustainability of our countries and societies. Organised terrorism is based on a false cultural background that exploits by mobilising its followers in the name of religion. Therefore, it is not enough to rely on military means to confront it.

This dangerous and evil disease obliterates the moderation professed by religious scholars and intellectuals of all sects and religions, who are working to spread the discourse of tolerance and openness in order that it becomes commonplace throughout each community.

There is no doubt that the meetings of religious leaders and thinkers from different religions and cultures have contributed to spreading the culture of moderation and dialogue

The International Dialogue Centre (KAICIID) in Vienna has been one of the institutions at the forefront of working to promote a culture of dialogue and peace among different



peoples. In the framework of countering extremist ideology, the Centre has named this conference Interreligious Dialogue for Peace: Promoting Peaceful Coexistence and Common Citizenship.

There is no doubt that the meetings of religious leaders and thinkers from different religions and cultures have contributed to spreading the culture of moderation and dialogue, which reflects positively on our people and societies. We have the support of the voices of moderate people who recognise, but boldly reject, the logic of sectarian and religious conflicts and hatred. Instead, they call for the establishment of communities based on justice and equality among all citizens.

One way this can be done is by governments rethinking religious education curricula and amending textbooks to focus on issues of cultural and religious diversity, intellectual and religious freedom, freedom of belief, and human rights.

We propose to our governments the establishment of religious institutes that are common to both Muslims and Christians, in order that religious students, overseen by sheikhs and priests, sit together; priests study the heavenly religions together; and graduates of these schools are encouraged to preach the message of tolerance, brought by the apostles and prophets, in their communities.

All of these things contribute effectively to the promotion of a culture of moderation and coexistence based on love, tolerance and mutual respect.

The launching of KAICIID’s interreligious platform for dialogue and cooperation in the Arab World is an important step toward consolidating the values of dialogue and common citizenship that we need to confront the culture of extremism and terrorism. This calls for the selection of religious figures and institutions that do not constitute a religious cover for extremism in their countries. Some speak

*The Interreligious Platform for Dialogue and Cooperation in the Arab World.
Facing camera from left: Prof. Dr. Hichem Grissa, Judge Sheikh Ghandi Makarem, HE Sayed Ali El-Amine,
HE Sheikh Muhammad Hussein, His Grace Bishop Marcos*



at conferences about the values of dialogue and coexistence but, in their own homeland, are its supporters and a front for extremist parties and their policies.

It is now imperative that government authorities assume the responsibilities entrusted to them in preserving and

protecting their people, and continue to work on reforming the political systems and laws, applying the laws to all people with fairness, equality and decisiveness to deter criminals, despite differences in political, religious and sectarian affiliations.

**HE Sayed Ali El-Amine
Grand Scholar**

His Eminence originally studied under several Grand Ayatollahs in the city of Najaf, Iraq, where he reached the senior rank of clerical accomplishment — Mujtahid. He then taught senior clerical students, both in Islamic jurisprudence (al-fiqh) and the Principles of Islamic Jurisprudence (Uṣūl al-fiqh) in a number of seminaries in Iran, Iraq, Lebanon and Syria. He also headed the Islamic Law seminary in Beirut, and the al-Sadr seminary for Islamic Studies in Tyre, Lebanon, where he held the position of Mufti of Tyre and Jabal Amel. He is a member of the Muslim Council of Elders.

His Eminence calls for interfaith dialogue, emphasising coexistence between Christians and Muslims and advocating Islamic solidarity and unity. He has given numerous lectures to disseminate religious consciousness and religious moderation, and rejects hate, intolerance, extremism and terrorism.

He is the author of several books including: *Sunni and Shiite are one Nation (al-Sunna wāl Shia ūmma wahīda)*; *“Wilayat al-Fakih” and the Nation State*; and *A Series of Lessons in the Principles of Islamic Jurisprudence*.

Differences in custom and heritage should be celebrated in order to avoid the racist ideas inherent in some historical or social contexts and for which there is no objective justification

contradiction to the hegemony of globalisation. The story of the struggle of religions and cultures also looms as a contradiction to globalisation.

However, in the short term, these dialogues have created new forums for understanding the many voices, thus contributing to the promotion of moderation in the long term.

The adoption of the concepts of citizenship, equality and rights necessarily requires condemnation of actions that contradict the principle of citizenship — those practices and behaviour that we all reject, that are not recognised by the laws of heaven but are based on discrimination between the proprietors of heavenly religions, entailing practices of contempt and marginalisation which sometimes lead to killing.

The chief instrument of cohesion and the strengthening of the common will is the national constitutional state, based on the principles of citizenship, equality, coexistence and the rule of law.

humanity has never known before. Here we find both a model and its contrary, with the events of September 11 — and then more regular acts of terrorism — coming as a

Rev. Dr. Andrea Zaki

Your Excellency Mr. Faisal Bin Abdulrahman Bin Muaammar, Representatives of Heads of State and Government, Your Excellencies, Virtue and Holiness, Ladies and Gentlemen — at the outset, I would like to extend my heartfelt thanks and appreciation to the International Dialogue Centre (KAICIID) for this generous invitation to a large number of Islamic and Christian religious leaders, and common citizenship around the world, to launch the Interreligious Platform for Dialogue and Cooperation in the Arab World, a goal that we all strive to achieve. We reject all forms of violence and extremism with which the scourge of terrorism and extremism seeks to destabilise the social fabric, not only in our Arab region but in all parts of the world.

The theme of our conference today is the Interreligious Dialogue for Peace: Promoting Peaceful Coexistence and Common Citizenship, an objective that we all strive to achieve. Our cultural perceptions of society — and the presentation

of them — require objectivity in order to deal with diversity and differences. We must circumvent polarisation without wishing to rule or disparage other cultures. Differences in custom and heritage should be celebrated in order to avoid the racist ideas inherent in some historical or social contexts and for which there is no objective justification.

An observer and follower of interfaith dialogue over half a century ago, noted that dialogue had become subject to domestic and international suspicion. This may be due to the limited results of many previous international meetings, or perhaps to the fact that the majority of the public of most religions did not believe in the usefulness of dialogue. Also, the media have played an important role in the propagation of the clashes associated with ethnic and religious groups.

At a time when globalisation has sought to create universal cultural, social and political patterns, it has also highlighted ethnic and religious conflict in a way that



Rev. Dr Andrea Zaki
President of the Coptic Protestant Community in Egypt

Dr. Zaki is Director General of the Coptic Evangelical Organization for Social Services. He is also President of the Protestant Community of Egypt, President of the Fellowship of Middle East Evangelical Churches, and a part time lecturer at the Evangelical Theological Seminary in Cairo. He has authored several books, as well as numerous articles for publications such as the Egyptian daily newspaper, *Al Ahrām*.

Dr. Zaki received a bachelor's degree in Theology from the Cairo Evangelical Seminary; a master's degree in Theological Studies from Eastern University, Pennsylvania; and a PhD from the University of Manchester. He also holds a diploma in Social Development from St. Francis Xavier University, Canada.

Religious institutions and cultural and political leaders fail when they are unable to stop traitors from threatening the stability or competences of the state. It is important to remember that an ignorance regarding common citizenship encourages discussion and doubts around ethnic minorities and their rights.

However, there is no doubt that support for a culture of dialogue, pluralism and participation has received considerable attention from governments and civil society organisations around the world. Many organisations have contributed to the culture of citizenship and pluralism in Egypt including: the Evangelical community; the Dialogue of Cultures Forum, a centre concerned with dialogue at local, regional and international levels for nearly a quarter of a century; the Christian clergy, especially young people; and the media, young academics, and the leaders of thought, culture and media.

On the regional side, the Arab Network for Dialogue, which contributed to the formation of the Forum in a number of centres in the Arab region and in some countries of the Middle East, has contributed significantly to the dissemination of the culture of citizenship and pluralism, through the exchange of experiences between the member centres.

On the international side, the Dialogue of Cultures Forum supports the system of popular diplomacy through Arab-European dialogue and other American meetings, in which a group of Islamic and Christian religious leaders, parliamentarians, academics and intellectuals participate. Here, the dialogue concerns topics of common interest, many of which focus on regional and international arenas.

We are also pleased to be members of the Interreligious Dialogue Centre (KAICIID). Again, thank you for this kind invitation and for this remarkable meeting. We hope that we will achieve the desired goal.

HE Metropolitan Isaac Barakat

Your Eminences, Your Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen, Friends — please allow me to convey the greetings of Patriarch Yohanna X. Yazigi. As I'm sure you remember, we met here four years ago and, although we began several important initiatives at that point, crisis and conflict in the Near East and in the wider world have become even worse.

Today we have wars, fights, and fires everywhere. The gospel of John says: "Be peaceful to each other and the peace you give to each other is given to the world." But now we lack the peace of God, peace between each other and even the kindness of peaceful personal greetings. This lack frequently

points to the policies of war and conflict, which often condone violence and the use of violence for political ends.

All of us gathered here hold the conviction that a culture of peace is needed in the world today. This is reflected in initiatives that pave the way for the consensus of common values, the facilitation of peaceful dialogue and the building of bridges for peace.

We, as religious leaders and institutions, have a very important role to play, not only now but in the future. Our points of view, visions and initiatives should be the starting point for building bridges and creating hope. These efforts towards peaceful coexistence need to be implemented,

especially in times where we experience shame and suffering. Initiatives such as those launched by KAICIID present us with the possibility of returning to a peaceful coexistence, and provide the opportunity to serve humankind by enabling us to alleviate the sorrows of our brothers and sisters in the Middle East. Please pray especially for Syria and for the brothers and sisters there who have been displaced. We pray every second for them to be able to return home.

Our points of view, visions and initiatives should be the starting point for building bridges and creating hope

HE Metropolitan Isaac Barakat
Greek Orthodox Bishop of Germany and Central Europe; Representative of His Beatitude Patriarch Yohanna X Yazigi, Greek Orthodox Patriarch of Antioch and All the East

His Eminence, the Most Reverend Metropolitan Isaac (Barakat) holds a Bachelor of Theology awarded in 1996, a Master of Theology in 2000, and a PhD in Theology in 2011 from the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki. He was ordained as a priest in 2000, and served at the Holy Cross Church in Damascus. He was then ordained as a Bishop in 2011 and became a Patriarchal Assistant until his election as Metropolitan in 2013.



HE Judge Sheikh Ghandi Makarem

In the name of the Most Gracious, the Most Merciful. Your Holinesses, Eminences, Excellencies, dear Ladies and Gentleman — it is my pleasure to participate in this conference with you, representing His Excellency Sheikh al-Aql Naim Hassan, the highest religious leader of the Druze community. I wish you and KAICIID full success in this very important endeavour to enhance dialogue.

I hope that this regional dialogue and cooperation platform will become an important tool to enhance and promote peaceful coexistence and common citizenship for

all religions and for the religious actors in the Middle East.

We acknowledge all of the pain and destruction that Arab communities have endured over the last few years, hence the vital role of dialogue to create common ground and provide a clear plan towards strengthening common citizenship, peaceful coexistence and the respect for diversity and pluralism.

We hold strong convictions about the importance of dialogue in enhancing peace and putting an end to the conflicts in the Arab world. Dialogue is also key in overcoming the threats and risks from terrorist groups and any attempt to convert our Arab Spring into an Arab Fall. Therefore our



joint work to build bridges of mercy and peace and love in our countries is extremely necessary.

Blessed is the work of those who remain faithful to their values. Blessed is this meeting under the patronage of this honourable Centre. Let us create one common mission in

I hope that my voice will be heard so as to silence the voices of hatred and alienation. We need to return to the voice of wisdom and justice in order to preserve the freedom of discourse

order to sow the seeds of positive religious beliefs in all communities and encourage moderation, which will redirect religious dialogue onto the right track and keep it far away from any form of fanaticism and extremism. Our religious practices should not be superficial, but work purposefully

to enhance and promote the common values given by the heavenly messages.

We do hope that all of these efforts will be complemented by those of officials, and religious and political leaders, in order to facilitate a real dialogue for hope and to create deep and meaningful initiatives that are not associated with particular political platforms.

Allow me to express my sorrow over this massacre taking place in Syria. Unfortunately, the entire world is just watching and doing nothing. I hope that my voice will be heard so as to silence the voices of hatred and alienation. We need to return to the voice of wisdom and justice in order to preserve the freedom of discourse and the freedom of belief. In this way, we can meet the call of our righteous Creator, who called us to work for good in order to abide by the words of God.

HE Judge Sheikh Ghandi Makarem

HE Judge Ghandi Makarem is the personal representative of HE Sheikh al-Aql Naim Hassan, Head of the Druze Council in Lebanon. Judge Makarem has a master's degree in law.

Dr. Souraya Bechealany

Your Eminences, Excellencies, Highnesses, Holinesses, dear Ladies and Gentlemen — the Middle East Council of Churches, which I represent today, is grateful to KAICIID, its Secretary General, and staff for organizing this second high-level international conference and for conveying the invitation for my attendance.

Please, allow me to give you a short overview of the work of the Middle East Council of Churches, which was established in 1974 and comprises the Evangelical Churches, Eastern Orthodox Churches and Greek Orthodox Churches. Additionally, the Catholic family joined in 1990.

The Council receives its mandate from these four church families, each of which provides representatives. We aim to

deepen the spiritual and service partnerships among the member churches and work to unite them in word and deed, thus participating in the work of Christian unity and witness of the Bible, throughout the region and among its population.

Furthermore, the Council encourages dialogue between churches at the local regional and global levels, partnering on joint initiatives that support development goals and inter-religious cooperation. Since its creation, the Council has championed interreligious and intercultural dialogue and is thus happy to be able to participate in KAICIID's work.

KAICIID concentrates its activity in three areas: Firstly, education, which is also a major area of focus for the Council. Together, we seek to educate children to look beyond differences and to raise them to treat the Other with respect.



*HE Sheikh Abdul Latif Derian enjoys a laugh together
with HH Catholicos Aram I Keshishian*

Dr. Souraya Bechealany

After earning her PhD in Ecclesiology, Dr. Souraya Bechealany began teaching theology at Saint Joseph University, Beirut. Working as part of the Research Council of the University, she was appointed to the Faculty of Religious Sciences; Institute of Islamo-Christian Studies, and Higher Institute of Religious Studies.

In January 2018, Dr. Bechealany was appointed as the first female Secretary General in the history of the Middle East Council of Churches.

How can we stop the use of violence if the world continues to suffer from oppression, injustice and wealth inequality?

Secondly, KAICIID brings together religious leaders from all over the world, but we need to educate those religious leaders. How can we speak about peaceful coexistence and dialogue, if we are not able to educate religious leaders in order for them to be able to educate their followers?



Thirdly, we need to continue to work on social equity. How can we stop the use of violence if the world continues to suffer from oppression, injustice and wealth inequality?

Dear assembly — whoever says that he holds the only path to truth and is therefore entitled to rule over the world, remains alone in the end. The history of humankind proves

that our world is a better place if we look deep within our hearts and minds and realise that one religion is not better than another. We should look at the differences, not from an emotional, but from an intellectual perspective — seeing the Other as diverse and recognizing this as a fruitful opportunity to co-exist and exchange.

Prof. Dr. Hichem Grissa

In the name of God the Most Gracious, Most Merciful. Distinguished assembly — may the peace, mercy, and blessings of God be upon you.

To begin, please allow me to speak in a non-traditional way because I am going to talk about some personal experiences as well as about my country.

According to our scientists and scholars, this introduction to our discourse means that God is the Most Merciful, both in this life and on the Day of Judgment. God wants to grant us mercy. He also wants us to build the foundations of our own words and deeds on mercy. He, who is the most powerful, the most courageous, has given us only terms that are related to mercy, a methodology that has also been followed by the prophets.

I would like to take a moment to think about how peace and mercy are used in the singular, whereas blessings are talked about in plural

In a letter from Solomon, may the peace of God be upon him, to the queen of Sheba, he began: “In the name of God the Most Merciful.” There is another sacred sentence that begins: “The peace, mercy and blessings of God be upon you.” This is a saying from all religions, not just from Islam, and encompasses three meanings — peace, mercy, and blessings.

So, I would like to take a moment to think about how peace and mercy are used in the singular, whereas blessings are talked about in plural. Why? Because God provides continuous, permanent, non-stop blessings for every person and every nation. This is the foundation of all blessings so as to allow our work, the work of humankind, to be blessed.

Now, I would like to talk about more personal things. I was raised in a conservative Muslim family. My father used to be a Sunni scholar. However, there was something unique about my dad that I came to understand later. I was five years old before he enrolled me in l’Ecole de Bizerte primary school, run by the nuns in our country. My father sent me to that school for one year in order for me to learn how to write, behave, eat, and so forth. My father never told me what to study; however, I decided to study religion at the University of Zitouna. This is how I became a university instructor and then president of that same institution.

Recently I found a note written to the uncle of my grandfather, from a queen who appointed him to be an imam, the scholar in charge of a mosque. This is evidence of the preservation of our traditional civil society, as all imams are solely appointed by the King and Queen. According to the imam

Prof. Dr. Hichem Grissa

Dr. Hichem Grissa is a professor and Vice President of the University of Zitouna, Tunisia. He has a Doctorate in Theology, 1998, and is the author of several books on Islamic Finance. He is also a Sharia adviser to Banque Zitouna.

Sahnun, the great scholar born in the year 360 of the Hijri era, no scholar was allowed to preach or to serve at any mosque unless he studied at Zaitouna or Kairouan universities.

This illustrates that religious discourse has been, since the beginning, under the supervision and control of the government. This was intended to guard against a non-organized, chaotic discourse such as the one we are currently witnessing in the Muslim world.

On another note, Tunisia was one of the first countries to abolish slavery, in 1846, sixteen years before the United States. They accomplished this peacefully and without violence. Soon after, a series of significant meetings took place to establish the modern basis of a civilized society that would reject violence and extremism. In order to achieve

this, legal institutions and constitutional magazines and journals were established so as to preserve legal discourse.

We know that those who follow Sharia should aspire to freedom. That's why the *Shawaf*, was established.

To conclude, I would ask why Tunisia has one of the highest percentages, in any country, of Da'esh followers and fighters. However, I would say that those are not Tunisians — they were not born and raised in Tunisia. These individuals were raised in remote areas and then came to our country to try to occupy certain positions in it, but were unable to achieve their goals because of opposition from civil society.

In conclusion, I say do not forget the words of Abraham, Moses and Jesus — that we should be united and not divided under religion.



CHAPTER III

Panel Discussion One

Mr. Adama Dieng

Thank you very much. I'm here as a friend and a strongly committed partner of KAICIID and of this very distinguished gathering.

Let me simply say that I would like to focus on four key questions. Firstly, why is it important for religious leaders and policymakers to work together to reduce violence and promote social cohesion and common citizenship? As we all know, the prevention of violence and the

prevention of atrocity crimes is at the core of my mandate. States have the primary responsibility of protecting their population; to answer that the rights of all communities are respected without discrimination, including citizenship rights; and to promote social cohesion.

However, they are more likely to succeed if they support and cooperate with other, well-respected actors who can lead and influence communities. Religious leaders are among



How religious leaders and actors interpret the role of women within their faith and spiritual traditions, as well as the extent to which they promote gender equality and women's empowerment, can have an enormous impact on the lives of women and girls

those with the greatest influence over the lives and behaviour of those who follow their ideas and share their faith and beliefs. Because of their leadership roles, both policymakers and religious leaders have a special responsibility to speak out and act ethically and responsibly, as their actions and words can have a strong and wide ranging impact.

Both parties will be stronger if they work together, rather than in opposition to each other. That does not mean that they will always agree, but when their objectives are the same, that is to achieve peaceful, inclusive societies, they will find common ground. However, in working with religious leaders, political leaders must ensure that they do not favour one religious community over another. If they are to promote peace and social cohesion, they must work, and be seen to work, with all religious communities and be seen to promote the rights of all populations equally without discrimination, including citizenship rights.

This is a message for religious leaders — that they are stronger if they work together and cooperate with one another in advocating state support for their communities, including access to resources and services.

So, my second question is how can religious leaders and policymakers enhance cooperation and coordinate efforts in this regard? There are many ways in which this can be done. For example, my office has been working closely with religious leaders and actors over the last three years on a programme that is directly applicable to the prevention of incitement to violence that could lead to atrocity crimes: by this I mean genocide, war crimes, and ethnic cleansing. While the programme focuses on the role of religious leaders

and actors, these individuals stress the importance of cooperation with policymakers, and of the benefit of political support for more effective work.

We refer to our programme as the Fez process. It consists of a consultation with religious leaders worldwide on their role in the prevention of incitement to violence. I would like to thank all of the religious leaders who have been with us in this process. I cannot but express my deepest gratitude to Pope Francis first and to Justin Welby, the Archbishop of Canterbury, as they have been accompanying me in this process. And most importantly also, I should like to pay a special tribute to our brother Sheikh Abdallah Bin Bayyah who has been very instrumental in the success of the process, and who is going to translate the first Plan of Action into Arabic and French.

The Plan of Action was launched in July 2017, by Secretary General António Guterres, in New York, and just last week here in Vienna we held a meeting discussing its implementation. The consultations that led to the development of the Plan of Action provide many practical experiences of cooperation. For example, in Nigeria, religious leaders are currently working with politicians to pass a bill to prevent and counter incitement to violence. In Columbia, faith actors have contributed to building the groundwork for the peace process. In Pakistan, faith based organizations (FBOs) are working with the government to implement United Nations Sustainable Development Goal 16 — fostering peaceful, inclusive, and just societies. In many other countries, religious leaders and actors are working closely with policymakers to develop a national plan of action to prevent extremists and gender based violence.

The third question is: What are the main challenges of the partnership between religious leaders and policymakers from a competitive perspective? As I mentioned earlier, if partnership is to succeed, policymakers need to be inclusive and to work with a wide range of religious leaders, actors and FBOs, not just those representing the majority of religions.

To do otherwise will encourage division, rather than social cohesion, and risk exacerbating existing grievances of minority communities especially in countries where there may be a deficiency of trust between the population and state authorities. Partnership with religious leaders may help to bridge that gap if state authorities are open to listening to the concerns of communities.

Working with religious leaders and actors can also be challenging. Not all religious leaders and actors, including FBOs have an inclusive nature. Difference in religious beliefs and interpretation can be drivers of conflict and

ethnic and social tensions. Indeed, some religious practices and customs sanction various forms of discrimination and exclusion. Thus policymakers need to choose their partners with this in mind. Some FBOs may be challenged by work on issues that touch on sensitive areas such as health, including sexual and reproductive; HIV; and LGBT individuals or communities. How religious leaders and actors interpret the role of women within their faith and spiritual traditions, as well as the extent to which they promote gender equality and women's empowerment, can have an enormous impact on the lives of women and girls.

Regrettably, some faith actors, promote negative and harmful gender stereotypes and disregard the vulnerability of women in contexts where sexual and gender based violence are widespread. Examples are early or forced marriages and harmful traditional practices.

Finally, what are the main lessons learned from my own experience in working in this area? Over the last few years, I have noticed an increase in the compliance and willingness of policymakers to consult and engage with religious leaders and actors on a range of issues including peace and security, social cohesion and human rights.

Increasingly, political leaders see the potential of these actors to contribute to peace, social inclusion, and justice. From our perspective, we have learned the following: when partnering with religious leaders and actors as well as FBOs, we need to maintain an open attitude about beliefs and practices that are different to our own. We also need to be impartial when partnering with more than one faith, and seek a common ground in which we can work together.

In this context, engaging religious actors alongside secular actors helps to create a truly representative coalition and minimize religious differences. It is important to be fully inclusive and engage leaders from different faiths and spiritual traditions, including religious minorities, and to encourage the participation of women and youth. Establishing minimum quotas for female representation is essential if we want the voices of women to be represented.

Entry points for collaboration are easier to find around non-controversial common priorities, such as prevention of incitement to violence, poverty eradication and reduction of inequalities. I would like once again to thank my colleagues at KAICIID and to renew the commitment of the United Nations to engage with religious leaders.

As I was saying this morning to my good friend, the Secretary General of the World Conference of Religions for Peace, William Vendley, it is time for this world to be

Mr. Adama Dieng

Mr. Adama Dieng is a Senegalese jurist. In September 2012 he was appointed as United Nations Under Secretary General and Special Adviser to the Secretary General on the Prevention of Genocide. Prior to this appointment, from 2001, he served as Assistant Secretary General and Registrar of the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda.

Before joining the United Nations, Mr. Dieng was the Secretary General of the Geneva-based International Commission of Jurists, from 1990 to 2000. During his tenure, he was appointed as United Nations Independent Expert for Haiti, from 1995 to 2000, and was also appointed as the Envoy of the United Nations Secretary General to Malawi, in 1993. He was the driving force behind the establishment of the African Court on Human and Peoples' Rights as well as the draft African Convention on Preventing and Combating Corruption.

Mr. Dieng is a former Board member of various institutions, including the International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance, the International Institute of Humanitarian Law, the International Human Rights Institute (Institut René Cassin) and the Africa Leadership Forum.

Mr. Dieng is a member of the Editorial Board of the International Review of the Red Cross. In recognition of his contribution to strengthening the rule of law and the fight against impunity, he was appointed an Honorary Chairman of the Washington-based World Justice Project.

more spiritual. It is time to bring about more spirituality within the United Nations and to make sure that within the Security Council, which has the primary responsibility for peace and security, we feel that the virtues are there and that spirituality will guide the decisions of the council.

What we have seen in past days, be it in Syria or Myanmar with the persecution of the Rohingya — these are situations that are simply unacceptable. And I am sure that, if we succeed in bringing more virtue and spirituality into that very important organ, the United Nations, the world will be better than it is today.

Panel I — The Role of Religious Leaders and Policymakers in Promoting Social Cohesion and Common Citizenship

Engagement and cooperation between religious leaders and policymakers has proven not only to be successful, but to have significant global impact. Religious leaders often serve as role models and mediators in their communities and are a crucial resource for conflict mitigation on the ground. The support and partnership of policymakers in achieving joint goals for inclusive, cohesive societies is a crucial basis for sustainable peace.

Similarly, religious leaders need to be keenly aware of their influence, and to support good policy by speaking out against injustice, discrimination, hate crime, and exclusion. They should also take a strong stance against the misuse of religion to justify violence, instead advocating inclusion for all groups, particularly with regard to equal access to resources and services.

In order for both policymakers and religious actors to best support one another, strong literacy is needed. Increasing political literacy among religious actors, and religious literacy among government actors will create a forum for much stronger engagement.

Finally, religious leaders are much stronger when they partner across various religions and denominations. Working together and appearing together in public serves as a visible example of interreligious/intra-religious cooperation. This is particularly helpful in both current and post-conflict areas. These interreligious partnerships are critical in dispelling harmful prejudices that can threaten the social fabric.

“We need to educate our children to engage in dialogue and respect others even if we have different religions or speak different languages”

His Eminence the Most Reverend Metropolitan Elias (Aude), Greek Orthodox Metropolitan of Beirut and Dependencies

Metropolitan Elias Audi has worked for years with political leaders on promoting peace in Lebanon as well as on various education initiatives.

“The challenge is to show that interreligious dialogue is authentic, authoritative, meaningful and inclusive in participation and agendas”

Ms. Katherine Marshall, Executive Director of the World Faiths Development Dialogue

Ms. Marshall leads the Berkley Center's work on religion and global development. She helped to create and now serves as the executive director of the World Faiths Development Dialogue. In her four decades of experience she has worked on a wide range of development issues in Africa, Latin America, East Asia, and the Middle East, particularly those facing the world's poorest countries.

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From left: Prof. Mohammed Abu-Nimer, Ven. U Seindida, Ms. Katherine Marshall, His Eminence the Most Reverend Metropolitan Elias (Aude), His Royal Eminence Alhaji Muhammadu Sa'ad Abubakar III, Ms. Virginie Baikoua

“In Myanmar, religious leaders of all faiths have played an important role in both spiritual and socio-political aspects”

Venerable U Seindida, Core Member, Peaceful Myanmar Initiative Network

As a Buddhist monk and member of the Peaceful Myanmar Initiative, Venerable U Seindida has worked to strengthen social cohesion in fragile communities throughout Myanmar, by equipping people with tools for effective dialogue.



Former Austrian President Heinz Fischer, an honoured guest at the conference, speaks to members of the press. The president has been a valued supporter of dialogue as a way to promote mutual understanding and human rights

“Hope is not lost and the world can be a much better place if we continue to come together like this”

His Royal Eminence Alhaji Muhammadu Sa’ad Abubakar III, Sultan of Sokoto and President-General of the National Nigerian Supreme Council for Islamic Affairs

His Royal Eminence is the main spiritual leader of many of the Muslim communities in Nigeria. He works diligently to promote peace and unite religious communities against hate preachers.

“In the area of humanitarian aid and mediation, religious leaders have a great responsibility in their communities and societies”

Ms. Virginie Baikoua, Minister of Social Affairs and National Reconciliation in Central African Republic

Ms. Baikoua is an advocate for the most vulnerable in the Central African Republic and has served as an advocate for women, as well as coordinating support services for those affected by HIV/AIDS.

“Our voice is much stronger if we speak up together”

Chief Rabbi Pinchas Goldschmidt

As spiritual leader of the Moscow Choral Synagogue; head of the rabbinical court of the Russian Commonwealth; officer of the Russian Jewish Congress; and president of the Conference of European Rabbis, Rabbi Goldschmidt has advocated religious freedoms in both religious and political capacities.



CHAPTER IV

Panel Discussion Two

Ambassador Alvaro Albacete

Thank you very much. Working with partners is a strategic decision for KAICIID. Actually, if we think carefully about KAICIID’s mandate, which is the promotion of interreligious and intercultural dialogue, we will immediately realise that for that to happen, we need to widen the spectrum of our contacts and our interlocutors as much as we can.

We get in contact with partners and, through those partners, we get in contact with new partners, and through them with more and more interlocutors. That is the rationale of the partnership that we have established with many institutions. Some of them are represented here in the panel today. In this exercise of identifying partners with whom we can work, I think that it is important to have knowledge — to know who is who and to know who is working in the same field of interreligious dialogue.

From that point of view, I want to acknowledge the work

that my colleagues at KAICIID have been doing for the past four years with the Peace Mapping Programme and the subsequent Dialogue Knowledge Hub. Under this initiative, we have managed to identify more than 400 different institutions, units, centres, and universities, which are also working in interreligious and intercultural dialogue.

The Dialogue Knowledge Hub is an open-access programme, meaning that you can access the initiative through our website and you can consult and use it for the purpose of contacting those institutions working in that field. Also it’s a live programme, which means you can contribute to the various e-resources by adding new institutions or initiatives in the field.

In today’s panel, we have representatives from intergovernmental organizations, including the UN, the European Union and some friends from the African Union. I want to highlight that those three intergovernmental organizations



are strategic partners for KAICIID. Also joining us today are representatives from non-governmental organizations. These include the Network of Religious and Traditional Peacemakers, the Partnership on Religion and Sustainable Development, the World Organization of the Scouts Movement, and Religions for Peace.

We are speaking about intergovernmental organizations, non-governmental organizations, and also about religious leaders. I want to highlight that the combination of those three actors is what summarizes the vision and the approach of KAICIID

I want to take a moment to talk specifically about Religions for Peace, because that institution goes back to the origin of KAICIID. We see the example set by Religions for Peace in many of the initiatives that we implement at the Centre. I want to pay tribute to their experience and knowledge, as well as to their Secretary General, Dr. William Vendley. I’m very proud to say that today, and over the past few months, we have been in the process of implementing a common initiative in Latin America.

Today, we are speaking about intergovernmental organizations, non-governmental organizations, and also about religious leaders. I want to highlight that the combination of those three actors is what summarizes the vision and the approach of KAICIID. That is very much embedded in the structure of KAICIID through the governing bodies of the organization: the Council of Parties, the Board of Directors and the Advisory Forum. We’re very proud to speak with you all today because we think that the active involvement of those three main actors will have a very positive impact in society and in the world as a whole. We hope we will be able to work together in that field.

I would like to finish by saying something that has been said already by my good friend, UN Special Adviser, Adama

Ambassador Alvaro Albacete KAICIID Deputy Secretary General

From February 2014, Ambassador Albacete served KAICIID as special adviser to the Secretary General for public diplomacy. Since then he has been a leader in developing and implementing KAICIID’s use of interreligious dialogue for peacebuilding in particular in the Central African Republic and Nigeria.

Previously, Ambassador Albacete was Ambassador at Large dealing with interreligious and intercultural dialogue for the Spanish Ministry of Foreign Affairs. He has worked for the European Commission in Bosnia-Herzegovina as an adviser in the area of good government for the Presidency of the State and the Ministry of European Integration between 1999 and 2002. He has also worked for the Inter-American Development Bank in Argentina, Bolivia, Panama and Paraguay, and has been a guest professor of the École Nationale d’Administration of France. He was trained in Driving Government Performance by the Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University.

Ambassador Albacete has served in diverse positions in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Spain, including the Division for the United Nations, Director of Parliamentary Affairs, Deputy Director of the Minister’s Cabinet and Ambassador.

As Deputy Secretary General, Ambassador Albacete develops and coordinates KAICIID policy and action at the wider international level, in close cooperation with the European Union, the United Nations and other international organizations. At the same time, he promotes dialogue and cooperation with non-Member States and designs and implements KAICIID’s membership enlargement strategy.

Dieng, who talked about the conditions in Syria, Myanmar, and in all of those other countries in which religion has been manipulated to justify violence. We know that there have been many casualties and we want to denounce the situation in those areas and to show solidarity with the victims of those attacks. Those sentiments have been reflected many times in statements from our Board of Directors but I wanted to close today by affirming them once more.



Mr. Khaled Abdel Shafi (pictured right) shares his views at the conference, as part of a panel of experts which included Dr William Vendley, Mr. Ulrich Nitschke, Mr. Ahmad Alhendawi, Ms. Merete Bilde, and Dr. Mohamed Elsnousi

Panel II — Global Partnerships for Dialogue and Promoting Social Cohesion

Interreligious and intercultural dialogue has become instrumental in maintaining peace and stability in communities around the world. Religious institutions as well as religious leaders are uniquely positioned to promote social cohesion in their communities. However, the positive effects of their engagement are best multiplied through a strategic network of partners and platforms.

Longterm partnership frameworks with international organizations and networks are vital to ensure global and sustainable change. Effective engagement occurs when organizations avoid duplication of efforts, jointly mobilize resources, share costs, and exchange best practices with one another.

To that end, it is important to establish platforms which are multi-disciplinary, multi-stakeholder, multi-sectoral (governments, civil society, private sector, media, religious institutions) and multi-instrumental. Marginalized groups such as minorities and women also need to be given a seat at the dialogue table in order to effectively advocate for strong communities.

Furthermore, faith-based and secular institutions should work hand-in-hand on addressing common concerns and values. Collaboration between these sectors is particularly key for the promotion of Agenda 2030 (the Sustainable Development Goals), and many religious leaders and policymakers are already partnering on their implementation.

Accordingly, the Interreligious Platform for Dialogue and Cooperation in The Arab World aligns with SDG 16 which aims to “Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all, and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels.” Platforms such as this one help coordinate the efforts of multiple actors to foster social cohesion, establish common citizenship, and nurture tolerant, pluralistic communities.

“If we all join forces to implement Agenda 2030 we will achieve what you, the religious leaders, aim for”

Mr. Khaled Abdel Shafi, Director of the UNDP Regional Hub in Amman

As part of the UNDP Regional Hub in Amman, Mr. Shafi works to help countries achieve the simultaneous eradication of poverty and significant reduction of inequalities and exclusion. He also advocates to prevent conflict and for the peaceful transition of countries.

“Religion cannot be written off, ignored or seen as a phenomenon, but in the world of policy we come to that realization very slowly and at times reluctantly”

Ms. Merete Bilde, Policy Adviser, European External Action Service

Ms. Bilde has worked on issues related to political aspects of Islam and cross-cultural relations. She has been involved in a number of initiatives at the cross-section of religion and politics within the EU, including issues related to freedom of expression, freedom of religion or belief, as well as the defamation debate. In the aftermath of the Arab Spring, her work focused heavily on the new political actors and regional dynamics at play, including between the new Middle East and the United States and Europe.

“It’s time to work with young people to drive this agenda to ensure that the world we want is, in fact, achievable”

Mr. Ahmad Alhendawi, Secretary General of the World Organization of the Scout Movement

As the youngest Secretary-General in the history of WOSM, Mr. Alhendawi has extensive experience working on youth issues at the local, regional and international level. Prior to this, he was the first-ever UN Secretary-General’s Envoy on Youth, and the youngest senior official in the history of the UN.

“We have this big challenge ahead of us to see how the developmental world can coordinate better: not reinventing the wheel, but rather talking to each other and developing programmes from common goals”

Mr. Ulrich Nitschke, Head of the Secretariat of the International Partnership on Religion and Sustainable Development

Serving as the head of Sector Program Values for Religion and Development at the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH, as well as the head of PaRD Secretariat for the International Partnership on Religion and Sustainable Development, Mr Nitschke has worked in municipal development, capacity-building, and political development education.

“The challenge that we are facing is that we need to bring better cooperation. We need to bring better coordination in our efforts as we move forward. But the relationship and the partnership between governments and religious leaders always works”

Dr. Mohamed Elsanousi, Director of the Secretariat of the Network for Religious and Traditional Peacemakers

Mr. Elsanousi has a long career in fostering interfaith relations and supervising joint projects with interfaith organizations and federal government institutions. Previously he served on Secretary of State Hillary Clinton and Secretary of State John Kerry’s Taskforce on Religion and Foreign Policy Working.

“Religions must create multireligious virtue ethics that call each and everyone to contribute to the common good”

Dr. William F. Vendley, Secretary General of Religions for Peace International

Dr. Vendley is a pioneer in advancing multi-religious cooperation to help resolve conflict and advance development. He has coordinated these efforts to mediate among and heal societies in the aftermath of violence in Ethiopia, Indonesia, Sri Lanka, Iraq and many other countries. He is convinced that multi-religious efforts for peacemaking provide unique strengths that complement those marshaled by governments and bodies like the United Nations.



CHAPTER V

Day Two Opening Session

HE Dr. Abbas Shuman

In the name of Allah, the Most Merciful, Praise be to Allah, the Lord of the Worlds, and prayers and peace be upon the Messenger of Allah, the faithful Prophet Muhammad, his family and companions and those who followed his guidance to the Day of Judgment.

Ladies and Gentlemen attending this prestigious intellectual forum of followers of all religions and cultures, I salute you with the greetings of Islam. May God’s peace, mercy and blessings be upon you.

At the outset, it is my pleasure to convey to you all the greetings of the greatness of the Grand Imam Al-Azhar Al-Sharif, and to wish you success and fulfilment in order to achieve what you seek from this distinguished conference. We wish for practical and applicable recommendations that support peaceful coexistence and shared citizenship to reduce fighting and end the conflicts, wars, destruction and devastation evident in many countries of the world, especially in the Arab region, which has been transformed by actors who are no longer unknown to the theatre of major and international conflicts, and represent a considerable market for all types of weapon.

We, the followers of the Abrahamic faiths, all agree on the importance of peace among human beings, and we condemn all forms of aggression against human beings regardless of their religion or country. There is no greater crime than killing the human soul which is the structure of the Lord and his making. Allah says: “Whoever kills a soul unless for a soul or for corruption done in the land, it is as if he has slain all of humankind. And whoever saves one, it is as if he has saved all of humankind.”

Our Lord has sent his Messenger Muhammad, peace be upon him, for the sublime task that is reflected in the verse: “And We have not sent you, O Muhammad, except as a mercy to the worlds.” This task of inviting and guiding people through persuasion, kindness and tenderness, is expressed by the Almighty: “Invite to the way of your Lord with wisdom and good advice and argue with them in a way that is best. Indeed, your Lord is most knowing of those who have strayed from His way, and He is most knowing of those who are rightly guided.” “So, by mercy from Allah, [O Muhammad], you were lenient with them. And if you had been rude [in speech] and harsh in heart, they would have left you.”

We Muslims, believe that religious pluralism and sectarian differences are a divine will, about which our Lord Almighty says: “And if your Lord had willed, He could have made humankind one community; but they would still differ. Except whom your Lord has given mercy, and for that He created them.” Therefore, religious difference should not be a cause of hostility or conflict between followers of religions. Religious pluralism among followers of one religion is a door through which to facilitate humanity, not to cause discord and hostility or to enter into conflict and strife in an attempt to impose certain doctrines.

Oppression, injustice and the imposition of the guardianship of nations and peoples does not generate peace and stability

In this sense, Al-Azhar fully believes in the right of all human beings to live in peace and security, regardless of their religion and ethnicity. He is convinced of the possibility of working together under different faiths and a diversity of cultures, based on common human values that do not differ between followers of religions and cultures. In 2011, he established the Egyptian Family House, which combines the Egyptian churches and Al-Azhar Al-Sharif into a single national entity, with its presidency alternating between Sheikh Al-Azhar and the Pope of the Orthodox Church. In view of the great success achieved by this initiative, we have established a number of branches in many governorates of the Republic, and we are now considering the establishment of other branches in several countries that would like to benefit from the experience of the Egyptian Family House.

There have been several important activities outside of the Egyptian border, the most prominent of which was the dispatch of a delegation to the Central African Republic, at the request of its former president, to bring about a historic reconciliation between the parties there.

Believing in the possibility of joint action between the followers of different religions from all civilizations, the Grand Sheikh of Al-Azhar Al-Sharif conducts high level intellectual dialogue with both Western and Eastern Churches. He has also made visits to Canterbury Cathedral and the World Council of Churches. He has received delegations representing different religions and cultures, and organized many meetings and workshops at the Al-Azhar Centre for Interfaith Dialogue. The most prominent of these visits was of Pope Francis in 2017, where he participated in an important speech at our Peace Conference in the spirit of Al-Azhar’s keenness to establish the principles of coexistence and acceptance of the Other, and to promote the values of citizenship, peaceful coexistence and intellectual

pluralism. Hopefully, this will stimulate a larger presence and attendance of Christian brothers and sisters from various Eastern and Western churches.

In the Arab region alone, the money spent on purchasing weapons and developing systematic plans for destruction could, if redirected, solve the problems of hunger, poverty, disease and ignorance — the problems of countless innocent people. Destruction and devastation will be replaced by reconstruction and development if the machinery of demolition is stopped.

It is surprising that a force or a nation believes that it can live in peace on the ruins of another state or nation and on the scattered bodies of women, children, and the elderly, unaware that the emerging generations will be filled with





*From left: HE Sayed Ali El-Amine, Dr. Mohammad Sammak,
HE Sheikh Abdul Latif Derian, HE Dr. Abbas Shuman*

hatred, nourishing the spirit of — and lust for — vengeance. Therefore, at the end of my address, I share some of the messages that I deem important in the promotion of peaceful coexistence and shared citizenship.

Firstly, we have a need to believe in intellectual pluralism and to distance ourselves from the policy of exclusion and

HE Dr. Abbas Shuman
Deputy of the Grand Sheikh of Al-Azhar Al-Sahreef

His Eminence Dr. Abbas Shuman is the Deputy of Al-Azhar's Al Sharif Grand Sheikh. He holds a PhD in Islamic studies from Al-Azhar University, and a Masters in Sharia from the Islamic Studies Faculty.

Dr Shuman began his career as a teacher in 1986, and later served as head of the Sharia department from 2009 to 2013. In 2013 he was named Dean of the Islamic Studies Faculty.

He has published several books and research studies in Islamic science and Sharia.

of imposing restrictions on others. Perhaps the Al-Azhar Al-Sharif General Freedoms document issued in 2012, that includes a plea to freedom of belief, will serve as a model in this regard.

Secondly, we need to stop powers from seeking domination and control, and exploiting religious, sectarian and ethnic diversity as a weapon of intellectual support, used in parallel with the destructive power of military weaponry. We have to teach those powers that oppression, injustice and the imposition of the guardianship of nations and peoples does not generate peace and stability, as well as to recognize the extent of the forces of arrogance operating in the world.

Thirdly, it is important that researchers seek to promote peace, support coexistence, and benefit from those activities and programmes, especially in multi-religious and multi-cultural countries.

Fourthly, the major powers must demonstrate by their deeds that they constitute a tool to extinguish the flames of terrorism, conflict, destruction and devastation, especially in our stricken Arab region; and not support it by staying silent and ignoring it. They could eliminate it in hours if desired.

May Allah reward you and the good in you, and may the peace and mercy of God be upon you.

His Beatitude Theodoros II

It is with great honour that I travelled from Alexandria, Egypt to be among this distinguished delegation today and to participate in interreligious dialogue for peace. I am also honoured to have the presence of His All Holiness the Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew, and it is with his blessing that I am participating in this conference.

Since its first days of development and collective life, humanity had to develop rather rudimentary social structures and relations based on the principles of coexistence and mutual understanding. In so doing, it could attain an ideal existence through healthy symbiosis and the acceptance of the Other. Over the course of time, this healthy symbiosis has been disrupted, and indifference, heartbreak, and war have prevailed.

The main reason behind this distortion is primarily

egoism which demeans the human being. The egoist is expressed both individually and collectively in various forms such as personal, racial, national, and economic. Religion has played a leading role in humanity's harmonious symbiosis as well as its destruction. It must be noted that the deadliest and most destructive wars have been conducted in the name of religions. However, this contradicts the main role of religions which is to achieve both peace and harmonious coexistence. In such conflicts, the name of God is used to justify the destruction of His creation as well as of His flagship: the human being.

At present, a sense of dissatisfaction and unrest dominates human life. Individuals in society, in general, seem like castaways. An absence of a sense of belonging in modern society may stem from the way religious nourishment is promulgated. As a result, the spiritual concerns of the

We must share the outcomes with every believer and every nation. If the results of this forum stay exclusively among academics, we cannot say that we have succeeded, despite our honest efforts for peace

human may not be met, resulting in a lack of mutual understanding which must form the basis of human relations. In order to remedy this, religious leaders must encourage interlocutions that will lead the believers towards successful coexistence. This need was highlighted by religious leaders in the twentieth century, fostering a healthy dialogue between religions.

In the twenty-first century, religious leaders have discussed possible ways to assist individual acceptance of the Other through peaceful means and, above all, with love. However, if these conversations remain exclusive to religious leaders, or any intellectual minority, they can prove



counterproductive because the message of love should be disseminated to every level of the religious pyramid including civil believers.

Here, we face a major obstacle. Although we organize a plethora of seminars, lectures and conferences with illuminating results, the latter seldom reaches the ears of believers at all ends of the spectrum. This conference should focus on this important issue and attempt to solve it.

Allow me to conclude by speaking about the African continent and the Greek Orthodox Church of Alexandria. The Alexandrian church extends across the whole African continent and is a multinational institution with 28 archbishoprics and five provincial bishoprics.

The patriarchate is active in every African country and exercises intellectual jurisdiction over every Orthodox Christian on the continent without discriminating against nationality or ethnicity. For us, the Patriarchate of Alexandria, the main objective is to satisfy the needs of every human being as they are the complete and perfect image of God. A person's religion, nationality and skin colour are not taken into consideration in the patriarchate's work in Africa. Instead, we aim to serve God's will and the main purpose of the church, which is the salvation of humanity. Therefore we aid everyone with love.

Africa is a vast continent with issues that require multiple actions to be taken for development. The Church of Alexandria attempts to surpass these difficulties by consolidating human freedom. One of our main goals is to offer everyone the chance to coexist peacefully with every culture, nation, and language. We realize that this is not an easy path, as Africa is home to more than 800 tribes, with more than 700 dialects used across the continent. Furthermore, each country has different systems of education, as well as differences due to the multinational composition. Despite the difficulties, we are diligently working towards achieving a peaceful coexistence of the African population, in the name of God.

Finally, we are committed to the protection of religious freedom for all Africans. In each of our meetings with secular leaders, we highlight the urgent need for religious freedom for all human beings without discrimination. For example, a few days ago I visited Sudan and during my stay, met the country's vice president and various ministers.

We spoke about the plans for achieving religious peace in Sudan, and the consequent potential for stability and development. This confirmation of the country's internal and external policies signals a general acceptance of respect for the right to religious freedom. As a result, the vice president

**His Beatitude Theodoros II of Alexandria
Pope and Patriarch of Alexandria and All Africa**

His Beatitude Theodoros II is a graduate of the Rizarios Ecclesiastical School of Athens and holds a degree from the Theological Faculty of the Aristotelian University of Thessaloniki. He also studied History of Art, Literature and Philosophy in Odessa, Russia. Between 1975 and 1985, he served as Archdeacon and then as Chancellor of the Holy Metropolis of Lambis and Sfakion.

Having been called back to the Ancient Patriarchate of Alexandria by the late Patriarch Nicholas VI, he became Patriarchal Exarch of the Throne in Russia, based in Odessa between 1985 and 1990, where he established the Hellenic Cultural Institution and the Philikis Eterias Museum. In 1990 he was consecrated Bishop of Cyrene and was appointed Patriarchal Representative of Parthenios III in Athens from 1990 to 1997. In 2004 he was unanimously elected by the Hierarchs of the Alexandrian Throne as Pope and Patriarch of Alexandria and All Africa.

invited my church to organize an International Interreligious Conference on Religious Freedom and Peace in the country's capital, Khartoum.

We can conclude that religion and religious leaders have a great responsibility and obligation to promote peaceful coexistence and mutual understanding among people from different cultures and faiths. Today's forum has a clear objective; but, in order for it to be achieved — and this should be emphasized — we must share the outcomes with every believer and every nation. If the results of this forum stay exclusively among academics, we cannot say that we have succeeded, despite our honest efforts for peace.

I would like to thank you for the invitation to travel from Egypt to join you for this conference. Egypt is a peaceful country and the will of our president is for Muslims and Christians to live together peacefully under the same sky. Because I am a missionary who travels regularly throughout Africa, I will extend your love to all of the African nations. I will also tell them that there are people who believe in peace and God and who want to co-exist. With peace and love, because this is the Will of God.

Dr. Abdullah M. AlMatouq

May the peace, mercy and the blessings of God be upon you. Your Holinesses, Eminences, Excellencies, Esteemed Scholars, Ladies and Gentlemen — in the name of the Most Gracious and most Merciful, I would like to thank you for your kind invitation and to praise all for the efforts being made by KAICIID.

These blessed efforts aim at deepening peaceful coexistence and dialogue, strengthening common values, and combating all forms of hatred and intolerance. This second meeting, under the title of Interreligious Dialogue for Peace: Promoting Peaceful Coexistence and Common Citizenship, showcases the importance of the role of this Centre, in addition to the purpose of building bridges among



interreligious actors. Given the ongoing conflict and wars around the world, we want to highlight the need to hold further meetings such as this one, so as to combat violence and promote coexistence instead of hostility, as well as filling the gaps between different religious followers. This is the main message, the eternal message, of Islam in addition to the messages of all other heavenly messages from all other religions. Dialogue is the foundation on which to achieve peaceful coexistence among all religious followers.

15 years ago, during my tenure as Minister of Islamic Affairs in my country, Kuwait, we ran a pilot project, establishing the International Mediation Centre to work on strengthening what is called intermediate values. We also urged the importance of dialogue as a conduit for conviction based on scientific methodology. For us, intellectual confrontation is pivotal to the combat of terrorism, with as much effort and investment required in this as to the management of security in the usual sense.

HE Dr. Abdullah M. AlMatouq
Chairman of the International Islamic Charity
Organization, Adviser at Al Diwan Al Amiri,
Special Adviser to the Secretary General of the UN

Dr. AlMatouq serves as Adviser to Al Diwan Al Amiri of the State of Kuwait, Chairman of the International Islamic Charitable Organization and Special Adviser to the Secretary General of the United Nations.

Additionally, he has been a Member of the Board of Trustees of the UAE-based Forum for Promoting Peace in Muslim Societies since its foundation in 2014, and a Member of the Saudi Arabia-based Muslim World League since 2010.

Dr. AlMatouq has received numerous awards including the Certificate of Appreciation from UN Secretary General Ban Ki Moon in acknowledgment of his efforts as Humanitarian Envoy, where he garnered support for humanitarian crises.

He played a prominent role in coordinating aid for the Syrian Crisis by organizing three donor conferences in support of the humanitarian situation. In addition, between 2013 and 2016, he pioneered four NGO conferences for the benefit of Syria, raising donations worth more than one billion dollars.

Intellectual confrontation is a means of uprooting the disease and stopping terrorist organizations from manipulating the minds of our young people, and exploiting economic and social problems in order to disseminate their evil thoughts. That is why everyone, from scientists, religious leaders and academics to journalists, sports organizations, and Civil Society Organizations (CSOs), should work on this.

Intellectual confrontation is a means of uprooting the disease and stopping terrorist organizations from manipulating the minds of our young people, and exploiting economic and social problems in order to disseminate their evil thoughts. That is why everyone... should work on this

A few days ago, I participated, along with representatives of CSOs, academics, and peacemakers from around the world, in a conference held in Washington, DC. At the end of the conference, important recommendations were made calling for peaceful coexistence, love, and civilized communication among all people.

In addition to the need to preserve human freedom, we also need to protect human rights and dignity regardless of ethnic, religious and cultural affiliations. This is another of the tenets to which we aspire in this intellectual, high level meeting.

In conclusion, I would once again like to thank the organizers of this very important meeting for the power to evince such a cultural, ethnic and religious diversity. We look forward to seeing fruitful recommendations that would strengthen our combat against violent extremism and all erroneous thoughts. Thanks be to God and may the peace of God be upon you.



CHAPTER VI

Panel Discussion Three

Rev. Dr. Samson Olasupo Ayokunle

Today, diversity is the current state of the world. With the spread of worldwide communication technology and the migration of people to every corner of the earth, we no longer exist in isolated societal, ethnic or religious enclaves. This means that as we socialize and educate each other, we must do so in a way that allows us to respond to and reflect the changing world.

There are five principal levels of interreligious dialogue of which interreligious education is one. These are:

- ❖ Confessional — where one talks, or makes a confession about one's religious beliefs, especially its benefits to the adherents.
- ❖ Experiential — a sensitively engaged observation of the religious practices of another person, made to remove distance in relationships.
- ❖ Relational — where friendships are built with people of other religious beliefs in order to create a peaceful society.
- ❖ Practical — where we engage one another in dialogue for the direct purpose of putting an end to religious tension, or preventing it.
- ❖ Informational/Educational — where one educates oneself about the faith of others in order to better understand them. This is where interreligious education comes in.



The current trend all over the world is that educational institutions, including colleges, universities (many are not religiously affiliated) and even certain seminaries, are actively looking for ways to respond to the issues of education in a religiously multi-faceted world. They seek to entrench a transformational process through which students could be educated to become global citizens with an understanding of the diversity of religious traditions and with strategies of pluralism that engage diversity in creative and productive ways.

Obviously, interreligious education is increasingly essential for equipping people to be citizens of the world. Therefore, from a societal as well as a pedagogical point of view, all academic institutions irrespective of their theological affiliation or inclination should be obliged to foster a religious dimension to citizenship.

I think that we are not doing enough about interreligious education, over and above teaching seminary students about world religions.

Previously in Nigeria, when we studied history and civics in primary and secondary schools, a basic knowledge of at least Christianity and Islam were taught. But today, as history is no longer taught, interreligious education has become more difficult. This may, to an extent, be responsible for a surge in religious violence more rampant now in Nigeria. All religious groups, in Nigeria in particular and the globe in general, must make concerted efforts towards persuading governments to include interreligious education in the schools' curricula.

Observations in the academic arena have sadly drawn attention to the Church seeming to have taken less of an interest in addressing the needs of the multireligious communities in which it now finds itself. As mainstream culture begins to recognize a growing need for interreligious understanding and endeavour, the Church must follow suit, otherwise it runs the risk of falling behind. Unless it actively invites interreligious inquiry and education, the Church will be forced to follow secular society and spend years catching up with the educational initiatives created there.

One place to begin this inquiry is in seminaries and church schools. The Church must begin by educating its educators. Our seminaries and religious schools must incorporate interfaith learning, dialogue and exchange in their theological training techniques. The Church will, in this way, be granting its leaders permission to explore interreligious avenues. In so doing, it will also be sanctioning similar exploration within its constituency so that it both

encourages interfaith dialogue and teaches people appropriate forms of exploration.

When our Christian clergy and laity are comfortable with the art of dialogue they will make their parishes safe havens for interreligious inquiry. The Church has the ability to accept and respond to the changing religious landscape in the world. Whether and how it does this will shape the future of interreligious education.

One of the integral parts of interreligious education is citizenship education. Needless to say, citizenship as a subject appears to be diminishing in importance and impact in schools, despite a number of private, non-governmental and public, governmental initiatives over a long period, globally. This development has been a blot on the landscape of public life for too long, with unfortunate consequences for the future of our educational, socio-cultural, economic, techno-scientific and democratic processes.

However, hope is not lost if we are determined to rediscover, redevelop and redeploy the benefits of citizenship education which strategically include:

- ❖ For students — an entitlement in schools that will empower them to participate in society effectively as active, informed, critical and responsible citizens.
- ❖ For teachers — advice and guidance in making existing citizenship provision coherent, both in intellectual and curriculum terms, as part of stronger, coordinated approaches to citizenship education in schools.
- ❖ For schools — a firm base to coordinate existing teaching and activities, to relate positively to the local community and to develop effective citizenship education in the curriculum for all students.
- ❖ For society — an active and politically-literate citizenry convinced that they can influence government and community affairs at all levels.

Citizenship has a clear conceptual core that relates to the induction of upcoming generations into the legal, moral or religious and political arena of public life. It introduces students to society and its constituent elements, and shows how they, as individuals, relate to the whole. Besides general understanding, citizenship education should foster respect for law, justice, democracy and nurture common good at the same time as encouraging independence of thought. It should develop the skills of reflection, enquiry and debate.

There are three related ideals that are mutually dependent, but each needing a somewhat different place and treatment in the curriculum. These are: social and moral/

religious responsibility, community involvement, and political literacy. Let us deal with these in turn.

Firstly, from the very beginning, children should learn self-confidence together with socially and morally responsible behaviour, both in and beyond the classroom, towards those in authority and towards each other. This learning should be developed, not only in but also beyond school, whenever and wherever children work or play in groups or participate in the affairs of their communities. We can assume that this aspect of citizenship lies at the heart of the matter. Here, guidance on moral and/or religious values and personal development are essential preconditions of citizenship.

Secondly, children should be learning about, and becoming helpfully involved in, the life and concerns of their communities. This process includes learning through community involvement and service to the community. This, like the other two branches of citizenship, is by no means limited to a child's time in school.

Students and adults might perceive many of the voluntary groups as non-political, but it is probably more accurate to designate them non-partisan, as voluntary bodies, while exercising persuasion, interacting with public authorities, publicizing, fund-raising, recruiting members and trying to activate (or placate) them, are clearly using and needing political skills.

Thirdly, students should learn how to make themselves effective in public life through knowledge, skills and values, acquiring what might be called political literacy, or a kind of wisdom that is wider than political knowledge alone.

The term 'public life' is used in its broadest sense to encompass realistic knowledge of, and preparation for, conflict resolution and decision making related to the chief economic and social problems of the day, including each individual's expectations of and preparations for the world of employment, discussion of the allocation of public resources, and the rationale of taxation. Such preparations are needed whether these problems occur in locally, nationally or internationally concerned organizations or at any level of society from formal political institutions to informal groups, both at local or national level.

Effective teaching and learning processes require well-trained teachers, positive learning environments and high quality learning materials. A good education policy underpins each of these dimensions, including thorough curriculum development and review.

Working with religious and educational institutions will primarily include independent and joint exploration of

current trends, facilitation of an exchange of experiences and improvement of access to expertise in advancing curriculum development and reform in dialogue and social cohesion. While there are many different ways of collaboration, due to the diversity of contexts in the global environment, there are also a number of commonalities. Thus, it is possible to identify key steps in the development of the curriculum and planning for implementation.

There are also fundamental processes that reflect the very principles of dialogue and social cohesion, including active consultation with all of those concerned and efforts at objectivity. Inclusive processes for developing curricula in this area help to ensure the legitimacy and effectiveness of the policies that could be adopted for practical application.

Each individual who plays a role in education processes, be it student, parent, teacher, school director, policymaker, curriculum developer, or planner, makes a vital contribution by translating the curriculum and aims of dialogue and social cohesion into everyday experiences.

Several models for translating the curriculum are used throughout the world, such as:

- ❖ Australia — curriculum development phases for civics and citizenship.
- ❖ Colombia — organization of competences for living together, democratic participation and plurality.
- ❖ South Africa — external actors and cross-curricular reform; applying a human rights perspective.
- ❖ Nigeria — structural change; adoption of the Japanese 6-3-3-4 system of education to catalyse human capacity building in technology.

A good example of this step into interreligious education is a New York-based programme, Seminarians Interacting. It brings Christian, Jewish and Muslim theological students together in a setting of mutual engagement and exchange. Students and staff of various theological schools spend several days visiting each other's institutions, immersing themselves in classes, worship and dialogue. At the end of each exchange, the students come together for an intensive weekend of debriefing. They share what the experience meant for them, both personally and in light of their own religious tradition/training. Obviously, the students learn as much about themselves and their own tradition as they do about the Other, because they are forced to work ecumenically as well as interreligiously. The students find unexpected allies in other faiths as they recognize common challenges in explaining doctrine and policy.

Each individual who plays a role in education processes, be it student, parent, teacher, school director, policymaker, curriculum developer, or planner, makes a vital contribution by translating the curriculum and aims of dialogue and social cohesion into everyday experiences

Another example is the Education as Transformation Project pilot programme which was inundated with over 700 university students, professors and administrators who understand that religious diversity on campus is a modern way of life and that no education can ignore the nurturing of the spirit alongside the mind. The conference in New York, for example, saw participants raise questions on topics such as interfaith service learning, methods of meditation and interreligious insights on non-violence. Participants challenged the traditional American separation of spirituality from education and invited reflective thinking and faith issues back into the academic arena.

The general benefits of interreligious education are that it:

- ❖ Douses the tension of stereotype or resentment against other peoples' religion that causes distance in relationships.
- ❖ Increases beneficial inter-relationships and widens a student's family network.
- ❖ Enables religiously bi-literate or educated people who know the history and theology of other religions to have a better grasp or understanding of world politics, history, culture and literature.
- ❖ Gives students or others ample opportunity to make an informed decision in adulthood of the religion they have the conviction to practice in life.
- ❖ Reduces religious conflicts and promotes mutual coexistence.
- ❖ Provides an opportunity to see the world from more than one religious perspective and make better informed decisions. This would make room for the

accommodation of other religious adherents in the practice of their faith and mutual interaction.

- ❖ Allows room to appreciate similarities in all religions, especially, the common factors of God and peace. It also allows us to understand the reasons for differences in religious beliefs.
- ❖ Enhances interfaith dialogue and makes it more productive.

Interreligious education contributes effectively to the formation of people's and societies' religious identities, as well as to shaping perceptions about the Other. Therefore, it plays an essential role in promoting common citizenship and social cohesion. Consequently, the role of religious educational institutions and relevant organizations emerge in developing curricula that contribute to promoting the culture of dialogue and the principles of peaceful coexistence, as well as in building the capacity of institutions and curriculum developers to enable them to integrate the values of common citizenship and social cohesion into educational systems.

**Rev. Dr. Samson Olasupo Ayokunle
President of the Christian Association of Nigeria**

Rev. Dr. Supo Ayokunle served as pastor of the Estate Baptist Church, Oyo, Nigeria and senior pastor of the Jubilee-Life Baptist Church for sixteen years before he was elected the 6th Nigerian General Secretary — now President/CEO — of the Nigerian Baptist Convention and President of the Christian Association of Nigeria, the largest ecumenical body in Africa.

Rev. Dr. Ayokunle earned a Master of Education in Guidance and Counselling from the University of Ibadan, and a Master of Divinity in Theology from the Nigerian Baptist Theological Seminary, Ogbomoso in 1995 before proceeding to the UK to obtain a master's degree in Theology and Religious Studies from Liverpool Hope University and a PhD in Theology with emphasis on liturgical studies. He is an executive member of the Baptist World Alliance whose head office is in Falls Church, Virginia. He is also a Central Working Committee member of the World Council of Churches and member of the executive committee of the World Body



KAICIID Advisory Forum members Shaikh Syed Arshad Madani and Sadhvi Saraswati greet one another during a break in the conference

Panel III — Interreligious Education and Common Citizenship Values

Dialogue is an important tool in society, allowing us to bridge differences through the promotion of respect for one another and the recognition of our common citizenship. It is particularly important that this understanding and awareness is shaped through effective education. Religious and secular organizations play key roles in implementing curricula that highlight common citizenship values.

Current trends such as globalization, urbanization and migration are leading to an increase of diversity in many societies, creating a need to enhance dialogue around common values in order to underpin mutual respect and shared identity. Other regions are becoming more homogenous as minority groups migrate to other areas and many religious leaders remain unexposed to other faiths in their training.

Furthermore, the influx of refugees in Europe from across the globe has heightened the need for schools to build bridges between cultures, as many adolescents are caught between competing identities. Effective education is needed to help youth balance successful integration into host countries, with the freedom to practice their own religion or keep certain traditions of their country of origin. Alternatively, non-integration can lead to unintentional ostracization and the potential for radicalization among young people. Education in common citizenship values is a key tool to combat all of these developments.

Religious actors play an important role in supporting government institutions with developing textbooks that eliminate stereotypes and prejudice. In turn, religious institutions have a great opportunity to work with governments on integrating principles, such as the link between personal and social responsibilities, into their education programmes in order to foster successful integration and cohesive societies. In addition to the informational level of education, courses should strive to include immersive experiences, such as visits to other countries or houses of worship.

“We’ve been charged with the responsibility to be ambassadors of coexistence and peace and we are passionate about our duty”

Rabbi Jeff Berger, Lecturer, Montefiore College

Rabbi Berger was a 2016 participant of the KAICIID Fellows Programme and is a strong advocate for educating religious followers about “the Other.” To that end, he leads the Rambam Sephardi Synagogue and teaches at the Judith Lady Montefiore College Semikha Programme. His great passion is working with people of diverse backgrounds to create and promote ‘Good’.

“We train Islamic religious teachers, not only as teachers, but especially as bridge builders between schools, parents and communities”

Dipl. Päd. Mag. Mabrouka Ryachi, Inspector of Islamic Teachers in Lower Austria

As a member of the Islamic Teachers of Lower Austria, Mag. Riyachi is dedicated to providing teachers with the tools necessary to help youth navigate the difficult period of adolescence. The training programme equips teachers to educate students on their faith and how to become successful members of society.

“CSOs and faith based organizations have the opportunity to collaborate with governments, in order to shift away from any exclusion-based education to an education based on diversity and coexistence”

Father Dr. Fadi Daou, Chairperson of Adyan Foundation

In addition to his duties as chairman and CEO of Adyan foundation, Dr. Daou also serves as a professor of fundamental theology and geopolitics of religions. He has worked on projects with the Ministry of Education for citizenship and coexistence.

“Interreligious education has to help people to feel confident in their own faith. Only if one is confident in their own faith can they open up to the Other”

Rev. Dr. Mitri Al Raheb, President of Diyar Consortium, and KAICIID’s partner in the Network of Religious Faculties and Institutes in the Arab World

Dr. Al Raheb’s career has been spent tirelessly working to foster peaceful coexistence in Israel and Palestine. He has been praised for his efforts to found and build institutions of excellence in education, culture and health.

“If we want to graduate leaders we have to promote dialogue and dialogue started in the university from the very first day”

Dr. Suhair Al Qurashi, President of Dar Al-Hekma, Advisory Forum Member, KAICIID

Dr. Suhair Hasan Al Qurashi is the President of Dar Al-Hekma University, one of the first and leading private academic institutions for women in Saudi Arabia. She is a specialist in the evaluation of higher education and quality management, and holds a Ph.D. in Education and an M.P.E. in Educational Research from Cambridge University, U.K.

“It is of utmost importance to deepen the principles of the right to citizenship and consequently we have to focus on strengthening curricula”

HE Dr. Tawfeeq bin AbdulAziz AlSediry, Deputy Minister of Islamic Affairs, Dawaa and Guidance, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia

In addition to his role as Deputy Minister of Islamic Affairs, Call and Guidance, HE Dr. AlSediry also serves as vice chairman of the Supreme Hajj Committee, where he helps oversee the hajj journeys of pilgrims.



CHAPTER VII

Panel Discussion Four

Ms. Kowther Al-Arbash

Do you know what happens in just 20 seconds on social media? 5.5 million videos are watched on YouTube. 1 million interactions take place on Instagram posts. We are living in a social media revolution. As soon as we wake up in the morning, before we do anything else, we take out our mobile phones and search to find out what our friends and colleagues are doing. Why? Because we are social beings. That is a fact.

Another fact is that we are afraid to be alone. Also we are eager to know more about the world around us and we have been deprived of this opportunity since we were children. Do you remember your parents' instructions not to talk to strangers? Do you remember religious speeches which referred to the Other as a threat and instructed you not to engage with the outside world in order not to lose your religious beliefs? Or that the Other wanted to harm or kill us?



Our main task now is to be firm in our path and to be aware that everyone is watching us. The ground is prepared to sow the seeds of tolerance

I think that social media has sparked a revolution for all of those who have been isolated because of those teachings and beliefs. Thanks to social media and our natural desire to know about the Other, the recommendations of our fearful fathers and mothers have been disregarded. In seconds, we are able to learn what's happening in mosques, churches, and other houses of worship around the world.

Now we are able to travel around the world with just the click of a button. I personally was unaware of the importance and power of social media. I had a Twitter account but I hated it because I thought it wouldn't reach many people. Then, in November 2012, I posted some tweets about personal thoughts. I thought that only a small group of followers would see them.

However, I was surprised to see that my tweets were widely published and shared, even reaching several extremist leaders. Some of them even cursed me. Followers who had originally been distant suddenly became more interested in me. Some tried to prevent me from writing or posting further. This made me aware of the importance and the power of communicating through social media.

What did I do? Well, just like most of you, I was raised in a conservative family. After this experience, I disregarded all of the former rules and restrictions I'd been taught and, instead, adopted a policy of openness. I had a strategy — I decided to talk with everyone, regardless of their cultural, ethnic, or religious affiliations. My only condition was that we needed to practice mutual respect.

I know that each one of you has had your own experiences and challenges and I'm sure you've been attacked by radicals or extremists, who fear dialogue and change.

When we are in the public spotlight, it does not mean that we automatically become more prosperous or that life is easier for us. On the contrary, it means that we have greater responsibilities and increased duties that we need to face with

wisdom and courage. Our societies are quite complex, especially given the legacy of our tendency to silence dialogue.

The good news is that today we have a platform, which others used to dream about. What if Aristotle or Picasso had been able to explore and utilise this kind of platform? Our main task now is to be firm in our path and to be aware that everyone is watching us. The ground is prepared to sow the seeds of tolerance.

I lost my own son in a terror attack against one of the provinces in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. In the aftermath, everyone was watching my social media posts to see my reaction. I was so angry and sad. If I had written something out of anger and grief, everyone would have understood. However, I knew that whatever I wrote would reach a large audience and I wanted to use this position to deliver a clear message.

That is why I decided to call upon unity and to encourage others not to let terror attacks divide us. Many were surprised, especially when I offered my sympathy to the mother of one of the suicide bombers who killed my son. We have to combat extremism with tolerance. We have to make any effort necessary in light of the new path the world has taken.

It's not about superficial acts, such as wearing the same clothes or eating the same food. We have to be deeply aware that others dream and suffer just as we do. Our mission as influencers in societies is to show people these commonalities. We need to work with them hand-in-hand, and encourage them to engage in healthy and sound dialogue. This is how we save people.

Ms. Kowther Al-Arbash
Social media influencer, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia

Ms. Kowther Al-Arbash is a Saudi journalist and writer. She is known as an outspoken critic of sectarianism during the past couple of years, especially after the loss of her son who stopped an ISIS attack on a mosque.

Ms. Al-Arbash became a member of the Saudi Shura Council (KSA) and earned the Woman Leader in Media Excellence Award. She also serves on the board of the King Abdulaziz Centre for National Dialogue (KACND).



Mr. Abdullah Khaled Khurayef, Ms. Alissa Wahid, Father Rifat Bader, Ms. Marriane Edjersten, Ms. Kowther Al-Arbash, Mr. Ayman Salah

Panel IV — Social Media as Space for Dialogue

Social media platforms have played a crucial role in recent years, giving activists and influencers a vital opportunity to promote IRD in order to counteract stereotypes, disseminate messages of peace, and foster tolerance. Media content flows across various platforms, from print to broadcast media to the Internet, widening access to information and creating a participatory culture where citizens not only consume information, but actively participate in its production and distribution.

Unfortunately, risks and threats have accompanied this positive development, such as fake news and hate websites, which pose opinion as fact. Sustainable strategies are needed in order to harness the transformative power of social media as a positive tool for the promotion of diversity and acceptance. Furthermore, there is an urgent need for partnerships across all levels — global, regional and local — to build bridges between communities through peaceful and respectful communications. Particular attention needs to be paid to prioritizing mutual respect in every social media interaction and campaign.

Influencers and activists have a great responsibility to engage wisely and boldly and to constructively use online tools to increase positive dialogue. These actors must serve as catalysts for their followers to discover shared commonalities, engage consciously in society, and promote common values.

“We should keep to our values, such as respect and dignity, and remember that these values are not for sale”

Father Rifat Bader, Director of the Catholic Centre for Studies and Media, Jordan

With a long background in traditional Journalism, Father Bader originally believed social media was a separate field, disconnected from his current work. He also believed his age would prevent him from learning to use it. Today Father Bader uses Twitter and Facebook regularly and has launched a highly successful website. He encourages other religious leaders to educate themselves on social media and to combat fake news.

“When we understand each other and can communicate without stereotypes, it is harder for messages of hate to divide”

Mr. Abdullah Khaled Khurayef, Social Media Influencer, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia

Khurayef is a social media influencer with more than 2 million followers on Twitter. During a brief stay in the United States, he noticed that many of the people he met had misperceptions about Islam and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. Similarly, he learned that many his Saudi colleagues had misperceptions about the west. Using his passion for languages, Khurayef has translated videos into Arabic and English which combat negative stereotypes. He believes that social media can be effectively used to counter hate speech and foster mutual understanding.

“The strongest and most dominant voice will shape human values and perspectives. Therefore, it is very important to have a social media strategy to raise awareness, consolidate movements, and engage supporters and opponents to start conversations with one another”

Ms. Alissa Wahid, KAICIID Fellow and Social Media Influencer from Indonesia

Wahid is a trained family psychologist, but is most recognised for her work in the social sector on multiculturalism, democracy and human rights and moderate Muslim movements in Indonesia. Wahid combated online bullying head on when she turned a disparaging message about her blind father into a message of compassion for disabled people, leading to surge of online support.

“Each and every one of us is a TV channel, a newspaper and a social media broadcast station”

Mr. Ayman Salah, KAICIID Trainer, and Lecturer at Cairo University, Egypt

Salah works as a Trainer with KAICIID’s “Social Media as a Space for Dialogue” programme. The programme originated from a set of recommendations made by high level religious leaders at the November 2014 United Against Violence in the Name of Religion conference. In 2017 alone, Salah and others trained 71 activists and dialogue practitioners on social media use as well as 15 new trainers. Salah hopes to use the momentum to create a regional campaign, launch an electronic platform to facilitate dialogue, and establish collaboration with global partners to promote IRD.





CHAPTER VIII

Closing Ceremony

Dr. Hamad Al Majed

May the praise and peace of God be upon you all and upon our messenger, Muhammad, and upon all the messengers and prophets. Blessed are those who have established the principles of dialogue, regardless of the differences between humankind.

In an article I authored that was published today in the *Asharq Al Awsat* newspaper, I posed some questions to individuals whom we have met or worked with on various occasions throughout the world. My prevailing observation was: “With all gratitude and respect for the efforts of KAICIID and other centres of dialogue, and with all due

respect to your esteemed objectives for hosting conferences and workshops on dialogue, as well as all of the seminars on peaceful coexistence that you organize for participants around the world; and with the additional efforts from the media and others; we never see you grow tired. The number of centres of dialogue and conferences on the topic of peaceful coexistence are increasing. On the other hand, the number of religious, ethnic and racial conflicts, whether or not they are linked to religion, is also increasing.

These, according to my point of view are very crucial questions to which we need to find an answer because, undoubtedly, the individual who poses those questions



might not be aware of the efforts of the centres and conferences in working on peaceful coexistence and dialogue.

We all know that these centres of dialogue and conferences do not have a magical recipe for the solution to ethnic, religious, racial and other conflicts around the world, even though they are well aware of the imperative to find this solution.

My experience has enhanced my conviction that centres of dialogue and conferences for peaceful coexistence are undoubtedly a necessity in our times

Today, we have centres such as KAICIID, that have achieved deeper dialogue between religions and cultures. Having had the honour of joining KAICIID’s first Board of Directors, I saw then what a great and practical impact the Centre’s efforts have in disseminating a culture of awareness about the necessity of dialogue, especially in our times.

These are times where we find the parties on the extreme right increasing their membership, and where we find extremists gaining more influence, with a consequently negative impact on societies. That is why centres like KAICIID take one step after the other, just as in the English adage: “Slowly but surely.”

Dr. Kezevino Aram

My first encounters with the value and purpose of interfaith dialogue started within the vast expanse of India, where religion and faith have coexisted for a long, long time.

I recall an incident when I was 19, at a medical school in India, and I was called out for having been absent from class for around nine days. My professor asked the reason for the

Dr. Hamad Al Majed
Faculty member, Imam Muhammad Bin Saud University

Career Summary

- ❖ Faculty member of education at the Imam Muhammad Bin Saud University, Riyadh
- ❖ Founding Member of the National Society for Human Rights in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia
- ❖ Director General of the Islamic Culture Centre, London (1996–2001)
- ❖ Chief Editor of *Islamic Quarterly* magazine, London (1996–2001)
- ❖ Chairperson of the British Muslims’ Heritage Centre board of trustees.

Dr. Al-Majed’s positions in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia demonstrate his commitment to dialogue — bringing people together, elaborating on mutual understanding and the avoidance of violence among religious groups. He is convinced of the importance of dialogue between various groups in the education system.

Now, my experience with KAICIID has also enhanced my conviction that centres for dialogue and conferences for peaceful coexistence are undoubtedly a necessity in our times — a necessity in order to find solutions and stop the fires of religious, ethnic, and racial conflict.

to focus on your profession.” In that same environment, four months later, 135 people died in a series of bomb blasts in my city. My medical school was commissioned to set up medical clinics in these areas. I was quietly summoned: “Your professor wants to see you.” They wanted volunteers from different traditions, but also future doctors to work in the clinics. I say this to you, because those who are gathered here are convinced that dialogue between religions must continue.

We must continue to expand dialogue, but we must still

Mahatma Gandhi reminded us that every big step towards change need not be a loud, violent revolution



convince our brothers and sisters of the actual relevance of it in our everyday lives. Yes, conflicts have reasons. Yes, the impact of violence and conflicts has increased its footprint around the world, but the desire and hunger for peace is also expanding. More and more people want to work together. More and more young people want to work with their leaders in shaping the future of their communities.

Men and women working together within and beyond faith communities will not only have a solution to the growing problems around them, but will also give rise to an image that the future will hold for itself as being true to the reality that this world must coexist. This solidarity will give to our own communities, as well as to the world at large, an image of collective, shared, peaceful coexistence where peace will be able to build and layer not only the aspiration for progress but for the great grand scheme of inclusive development.

I am extremely honoured to be here, together with distinguished leaders from around the world. But I am equally honoured to hear the voices, questions, and experiences from people around the world, and that is what I have been doing for the entire day here. I was just telling my colleague how wonderful it has been to see this balance between voices from the podium and voices of experience from the ground. This is the new model of dialogue — dialogue where everybody has a place, where the leaders listen and the communities gather to share what their leaders are committed to represent on their behalf.

Mahatma Gandhi reminded us that every big step towards change need not be a loud, violent revolution. He said: “In a gentle way, you can shape the world.”

Secretary General, I hope that our work together, our deliberations in conference halls and on the ground, will echo that message of Mahatma Gandhi, and that, in a gentle way, we can surely shape the world.

Dr. Kezevino Aram
Director, Shanti Ashram

Dr. Aram has been involved in interfaith dialogue for the past twenty years. She has led critical child development initiatives in rural India and globally. Together with Shanti Ashram’s platform of 215 partners she is deeply committed to integrated human development initiatives. Dr. Aram founded the International Center of Child and Public Health in 2016, through which multiple public health initiatives are being implemented for vulnerable children. Deeply committed to the Gandhian spirit, she has received several awards for her work and authored a variety of publications.

Career Summary

- ❖ Co-moderator and executive committee member, Religions for Peace International
- ❖ Chairperson, International Ethics Education Council for Children, Arigatou International
- ❖ Task Force member, End Child Poverty
- ❖ Governing council member, National Foundation for Communal Harmony, India
- ❖ Trustee, M.S. Swaminathan Research Foundation
- ❖ Distinguished member, board of management of Gandhigram Rural University
- ❖ Founding member, Namadhu Pangu, a social service outreach of Kumaraguru College of Technology
- ❖ Alumnus and visiting professor of the Harvard School of Public Health and PSG Institute of Medical Sciences and Research.

HE Bishop Miguel Ángel Ayuso Guixot

Eminences, Excellencies, Distinguished Guests — as the representative of the Catholic Church on the Board of Directors of the International Dialogue Centre, I would like to briefly share my experience of these years of collaboration in promoting

dialogue through this intercultural and interreligious exchange that is KAICIID.

Let me begin with a warm and sincere thanks to all of you for the work done in these first five years of KAICIID’s history. Thank you for your efforts, energy and determination



HE Bishop Miguel Ángel Ayuso Guixot, mccj
Titular Bishop of Luperciana, Secretary of the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue

HE Bishop Ayuso has always been active in interreligious dialogue, teaching in both Cairo and Rome as well as writing several important publications on issues related to Christian-Muslim dialogue. As a priest he worked in the local Church in Egypt and Sudan from 1982 to 2002.

Career summary

- ❖ Ordained Bishop, Titular See of Luperciana by Pope Francis, 2016
- ❖ Secretary of the Pontifical Council for Interreligious

Dialogue, 2012–present

- ❖ President of the Pontifical Institute for Arabic and Islamic Studies (PISAI), 2005–2012
- ❖ Awarded a PhD in Theology by the Faculty of Theology of Granada, Spain, 2000
- ❖ Served as parish priest in Sacred Heart Parish in Abbassiyah/Cairo as well as director of the Pastoral, Liturgical and Catechetical Centre of El Obeid Diocese/Sudan, 1982–2002
- ❖ Member of the Comboni Missionaries.

in pursuing the ideal of dialogue despite the difficulties and misunderstandings that marked the beginning of our work.

But most of all thank you for helping to direct the efforts of our international dialogue centre more and more towards a true commitment to peace and reconciliation. How necessary peace and reconciliation are today in our world that is so in need of promoting a culture of dialogue and

How necessary peace and reconciliation are today in our world that is so in need of promoting a culture of dialogue and inclusivism, respectful of every person

inclusivism, respectful of every person, so as together we can promote solidarity directed towards the common good.

Unfortunately, many areas of the world suffer from a lack of such unity. For this we cannot but express our sorrow and support towards all of those nations afflicted by war and conflict. The immense movements of refugees and migrants fleeing the horror of war shall find us united in compassion and aware of the urgency to address the present challenges.

Over the past five years KAICIID has made clear its vocation to serve as a centre for discussing interreligious and intercultural issues as well as offering information to all persons and groups, private and public, that request it.

The agenda for the next five years shall see us committed to expanding not only the number of members, but also the quality of the work of our intergovernmental organization, so as to become increasingly more effective and focused on providing those critical answers to the new problems emerging at a global level.

I wish KAICIID heartfelt success in serving the cause of dialogue in the world.

HE Metropolitan Emmanuel

Your Beatitudes, Your Eminences, the Secretary General, dear Participants, dear Colleagues — I should not repeat what my esteemed colleagues have just mentioned, but I would like to start by thanking those who had the idea of founding this Centre, of establishing this platform of living dialogue, not in theory but in practice, in everyday work. We have shared many moments together during these two days, and I would say that this is a common adventure.

Many have asked me why I am part of KAICIID. I think that the answer is very simple. If we look at your faces, if we look at you as participants of this conference, we see that some of you have known KAICIID before and some of you have come here for the first time. It is an environment where we both teach and learn. We are not here as masters, but to listen to one another; to listen to the experiences that everybody can bring.

As a representative of the Orthodox church, and of His Holiness who has been here with us, I would like to repeat

two words, and their associated ideas, that he mentioned in his speech — love and commitment.

First of all, love. Love, not only for our friends but also for our enemies. The latter case is more difficult, not only for those who love us, but for those who are probably indifferent to us. This is the basis of a dialogue that is sincere, transparent and continuous. This is what KAICIID has been doing. A dialogue that, according to my faith, has been based on what the gospel of Matthew mentions in chapter five, but a dialogue that is living. Not a dialogue for books or for libraries. It is a dialogue that we live day by day, and I think that for the past five years, all of us who have been engaged have been very grateful to His Excellency for his commitment to the staff as well to KAICIID for its commitment to the work that we are engaged in.

In 626, the founder of Islam referred to the covenant that was signed between Muslims and Christians, and that will continue until the last day. He addressed the Muslims saying that they have to respect this covenant. I think that this is a commitment, for now we don't make any difference between



HE Metropolitan Emmanuel
Exarch of the Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople

In his service to the Church, Metropolitan Emmanuel has become an advocate for peace and dialogue.

Career Summary

- ❖ Metropolitan of France, Exarch of the Ecumenical Patriarchate (election 2003)
- ❖ President, Conference of European Churches and the Assembly of Orthodox Bishops of France
- ❖ Co-President, World Conference of Religions for Peace
- ❖ Director, liaison office of the Orthodox Church to the European Union in Brussels
- ❖ In charge of interreligious dialogue for Judaism and Islam on behalf of the Ecumenical Patriarchate.

We are not here as masters, but to listen to one another; to listen to the experiences that everybody can bring

those who are Muslims, Christians, Jews, Buddhist, or those who live in areas where we need to establish peaceful coexistence. We are looking for a living experience and to live in peace and to respect common citizenship.

I have mentioned before that if we have wisdom as well as love for each other, and if we look for peace with hope, we can truly create common citizenship. We shall look at each other not as being different but as people of this world, men and women of different faiths who can share peace on earth as it is in heaven.

Rev. Kosho Niwano

During the last two days, under our theme of Interreligious Dialogue for Peace: Promoting Peaceful Coexistence and Common Citizenship, we have encountered earnest dialogue and discussion. In our present world, a process of division is progressing at all levels and it is far from true that social cohesion is being realized. We, religious and political leaders, have a common mission to change the direction of division to that of cohesion. We must take this critical situation seriously and, in so doing, progress to taking the necessary actions.

Why is our world facing a crisis of division and confrontation? Is it not due to the fact that we human beings resort to greed in order to pursue only our own desires, as well as

to exercise feelings of exclusivity and aggression against a world of difference and heterogeneity?

I would like to share with you what I believe to be the important messages, issued by people of faith and religion. These messages convey that one should:

- ❖ Spread not only our own religion, but the religion of dialogue. In other words, I, as a Buddhist, promote the approval of those of other religions, and the acceptance of differences.
- ❖ Transform one's way of life from self-centred greed to that of pursuing the enabling of equal dignity of all beings, and creating a common good. Namely, the way of life that respects "little desire, knowing satisfaction"; and that respects fulfilment and happiness of all



Rev. Kosho Niwano
President Designate, Rissho Kosei-kai

Granddaughter of founder Nikkyo Niwano and first daughter of President Nichiko Niwano.

Rev. Niwano devotes herself to sharing the teachings of the Lotus Sutra with leaders both in Japan and overseas as well as with the members from all parts of Japan who visit the Great Sacred Hall for services of worship and special events.

Career Summary

- ❖ President Designate of Rissho Kosei-kai
- ❖ Participation at several interfaith congresses including Religions for Peace World Assembly, Asian Conference of Religions for Peace
- ❖ Studied at Rissho Kosei-kai's Gakurin seminary
- ❖ Graduated from Gakushuin University, Tokyo.

based on a gratitude for the ultimate source of life that sustains all forms of life.

- ❖ Interpret and accept the preciousness of all phenomena and existence, thereby elevating one's own sacredness and dignity.
- ❖ Become aware that self-protection gained by attacking the Other, eventually leads to self-destruction.

One should understand that incursion offers a single illusion of stability but is destructive to true and eternal stability

- ❖ Understand that incursion offers a single illusion of stability but is destructive to true and eternal stability.

The importance of partnerships between religious and political leaders has been firmly confirmed at this meeting. These partnerships will have to be promoted at local, national and global levels. In so doing, I believe that the most powerful tool is a methodology of dialogue. There are several forms of dialogue — face to face, or implemented through the media, both traditional and social.

Last night, we rightly celebrated the fifth anniversary of KAICIID's foundation. And now, the platform of dialogue in the Arab regions has been launched. I think it is truly meaningful that dialogue and discussion will be further progressed on the important emerging issues. As a member of the KAICIID Board, I not only talk about peace and coexistence, but want to take concrete actions where I live, covering the points I have mentioned in my greeting.

His Virtue Sheikh Ul-Islam A Pashazade

In the Name of the Almighty Creator. Honourable participants of this meeting — on behalf of the Muslim community of Azerbaijan and the Caucasus, I sincerely greet participants of this conference dedicated to the promotion of peaceful coexistence and common citizenship, and express my gratitude to His Excellency Mr. Faisal bin Muaammar and the organizers of our assembly in this blessed land of Austria.

I pray to Almighty Allah to make this meeting successful in its accomplishment of this noble work, aiming at the

attainment of godly purposes. It is also my great pleasure to convey the greetings and best regards of the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan, His Excellency Mr. Ilham Aliyev, to the honourable participants of this forum.

As a newly elected member of the KAICIID International Dialogue Centre, I would like to offer my congratulations with all blessings to HE the Secretary General, the honourable members of the governing bodies, and all of the staff on the occasion of the fifth anniversary of this esteemed organization.



Correctly established relations between state and religion are basic terms of a successful multicultural and tolerant society

greatest value of all of the Lord's creations, and its salvation is dependent on the humanistic spiritual values inspired by traditional religions, through collaboration and dialogue.

Regarding the matter of the peaceful coexistence of peoples of various cultures and religions in one society of common citizenship, I would like to draw your kind attention to the model of Azerbaijan. Multiculturalism is a lifestyle in our multinational and multiconfessional country. Azerbaijan enjoys a justly established relationship between state and religion. National and religious tolerance, which is one of the UN-backed values, and a crucial element of civil society and real democracy, is supported at state level. President Ilham Aliyev considers the ethnic and religious diversity of our country to be a national treasure. Religious freedom, and the democratic rights of people of different ethnic and religious affiliations, are fixed and ensured by law.

Being an outstanding platform for interreligious and intercultural dialogue, KAICIID makes great efforts to achieve goals relevant to the modern world. Indeed, the maintenance and preservation of peace, which is germane to all of today's problems, requires close cooperation between public figures, including state and religious leaders. Human life has the

INTERRELIGIOUS DIALOGUE FOR PEACE: PROMOTING PEACEFUL COEXISTENCE AND COMMON CITIZENSHIP

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*The Closing Ceremony. Pictured from left:
Dr. Mohammad Sammak; Chief Rabbi David Rosen; Rev. Mark Poulson;
His Virtue Sheikh Ul-Islam A Pashazade; Rev. Kosho Niwano;
HE Faisal Bin Abdulrahman Bin Muaammar; HE Metropolitan Emmanuel;
HE Bishop Miguel Ayuso; Dr. Kezevino Aram; Dr. Hamad Al Majed*

I believe that such state policy together with correctly established relations between state and religion are basic terms of a successful multicultural and tolerant society.

As a rare model of interreligious and interconfessional harmony, encompassing the consolidation of the Islamic madhabs, Azerbaijan is now considered to be one of the centres of global interfaith dialogue. We have achieved this thanks to the consistent and thoughtful policy pursued in the country.

All traditional religions inspire peace, security, mutual

understanding and brotherhood. Interreligious dialogue serves those values, especially the attainment of peace and reconciliation, which has the power to ameliorate all problems at their core. As the representative of Azerbaijan, and as religious leader and Sheikh-ul-Islam, I give my total support to this aim and welcome the steps taken in this direction.

It is my great pleasure and honour to become a member of this honourable platform. Let the Almighty Creator bless KAICIID Dialogue Centre in its God-pleasing activities. And Allah bless you.

His Virtue Sheikh Ul-Islam A Pashazade
Sheikh ul-Islam of the Caucasus

His Virtue Prof. Dr. Allahshukur Pashazade is the current chairman of the Caucasus Muslims’ Board (CMB), chairman of the Qazi Council (Fetwa institution) of the CMB and Sheikh ul-Islam of Caucasus.

Born in 1949 in Azerbaijan, he received his religious education in Mir Arab Madrasah, Bukhara, then at Tashkent Islamic University, Uzbekistan, graduating in 1975. Upon his return to Azerbaijan, he held several religious posts.

In 1980 he was elected Chairman of CMB and received a title of XXII Sheikh ul-Islam of Caucasus.

Career Summary

- ❖ Sheikh ul-Islam and Chairman of the Caucasian Muslims’ Office since 1980
- ❖ Co-chair of CIS Interreligious Council since 2004
- ❖ Current chairman of the Advisory Council of Muslim Leaders of CIS
- ❖ Current chairman of the Supreme Religious Board of Caucasian peoples
- ❖ Senior Fellow of the Royal Aal al-Bayt Institute for Islamic Thought of H.K. of Jordan
- ❖ Fellow of Taqreeb bayn al Mazaheb committee for the Islamic convergence; and of Dar al Taqreeb foundation for the Islamic convergence.

Rev. Mark Poulson

Your Beatitudes, Your Eminences, Your Excellencies, Sisters and Brothers — thanks to the extraordinary staff of KAICIID, we have been given a master class in how to construct a platform for dialogue. We’ve listened a lot, and we’ve been provoked, challenged and stimulated by all of the riches contained within this room and by the variety of places that we represent. We’ve had the amazing opportunities to give feedback, interact and to network.

The organizing and building of platforms involves huge preparation and care. They don’t happen by accident, and they are only effective, as we’ve heard, if they are locally relevant but also locally inspired; and also if they’re broad and representative. There is no point in talking about women and young people if they’re not included. We need to be intentional and look beyond the ceremonial in our invitations. Platforms need to be authentic and rooted in practice. There was a great line from yesterday: “We live dialogue.”

Interpretation of scripture is still the battleground for all of us. If we deny others the identity in faith that they claim, then we push them to the margins

I think it always has been within my Christian tradition. The fact is that scriptures can be used for ill as well as for good. Interpretation of scripture is still the battleground for all of us. If we deny others the identity in faith that they claim, then we push them to the margins and, ultimately, we abdicate our responsibility of calling them through faith, through scripture, to change and to put down their arms.

The challenge for all of us is to go back to our communities and use this amazing example of hospitality and generosity, and of staff who go the extra mile, as Jesus said. That generosity of spirit, that openness, of gathering an extraordinary team into one place.

I want to credit our Secretary General who has managed to attract people from all around the world to work for

But, I am still concerned that we are in denial about the extent to which religion can be the motivation for violence.



KAICIID and to make it the dynamic place that it is.

Thank you for your generosity of spirit, thank you for telling the stories that you have. Let us continue the

conversation, let us continue to be frustrated by one another, and provoked and challenged by one another. Let us continue to be in the same space on the same platform together.

Rev. Mark Poulson

Secretary for Interreligious Affairs to the Archbishop of Canterbury and National Interreligious Affairs Adviser to the Church of England

Rev Mark Poulson was appointed Secretary for Interreligious Affairs to the Archbishop of Canterbury, and National Interreligious Affairs Adviser to the Church of England, in 2014. Prior to this Mark was the Vicar of St John’s Church, Southall for 11 years, where he and his family still live. Southall is an extraordinarily diverse area of West London with flourishing relationships

across different faiths and communities, and Mark has been instrumental in fostering these relationships. He has also been involved nationally in the Church of England’s Presence and Engagement Programme as a long-standing member of its Task Group, and sits on the Board of the Church’s successful partnership with government, the Near Neighbours Project.

Chief Rabbi David Rosen

It was in discussion at last month’s meeting in Washington DC of the Alliance of Virtue for the Common Good that I more fully understood two scriptural verses, one from the Hebrew Bible and the other from the Holy Qur’an.

The Biblical verse is from the prophet Malachi (3:16): “Then those that revered the Lord spoke with one another, and the Lord heard and listened. The other is the famous verse from the Qur’an (49:13): “O humankind, we have created you from a single male and female and made you into tribes and nations in order that you may know one another.”

One might ask what is so special about people talking to one another such that God is described as paying special attention to it; or what is so important about getting to know one another such that it is described as the purpose of human diversity?

The answer, of course, is that when we respectfully talk with each other, listen to one another, get to know one another, then we behave differently; while prejudice and bigotry are nurtured by ignorance and alienation.

That is why this gathering is so important. That is why

Dialogue must never be dismissed as just talk, for the talk is the encounter, is the knowledge, is the overcoming of misunderstanding, misrepresentation and hostility

sincere interreligious dialogue does promote peace. And that is why we who have the privilege to lead KAICIID are so grateful for your presence and commitment to this path.

Dialogue must never be dismissed as just talk, for the talk is the encounter, is the knowledge, is the overcoming of misunderstanding, misrepresentation and hostility.

May we be worthy of these charges from our scriptures, to make the world a better place that truly glorifies the Creator of us all — all of us, His children created in the divine fabric.



Chief Rabbi David Rosen

American Jewish Committee, International Director of Interreligious Affairs

Rabbi David Rosen was the Chief Rabbi of Ireland and the senior rabbi of the largest Orthodox Jewish Congregation in South Africa. Today he is one of the most prominent Jewish leaders in the field of interreligious affairs.

Career Summary

❖ AJC’s International Director of Interreligious Affairs and its Heilbrunn Institute for International Interreligious Understanding

- ❖ Past Chairman of IJCIC, the International Jewish Committee on Interreligious Consultations
- ❖ Honorary Adviser on Interfaith Relations to the Chief Rabbinate of Israel
- ❖ Honorary President of the International Council of Christians and Jews (ICCJ)
- ❖ Knighted by the Vatican in 2005 as Commander of the Order of Gregory the Great. Decorated CBE (Commander of the British Empire) in 2010 by H.M. Queen Elizabeth II.

Dr. Mohammad Sammak

Esteemed Brothers and Sisters — I hope you have enough patience left to listen to the last speaker this evening. I will try to say something out of the box. Dear Religious Leaders, Ladies and Gentlemen — the world is changing. It is changing quickly and profoundly. But the concept of the Other in our different cultures and traditions is not changing. On the contrary, it is becoming more rigid, hard and extreme.

Let me give you two examples. Firstly, Christianity, until the dawn of the nineteenth century, was mainly European

and American. Those two continents were home to 85 per cent of the Christians of that time. Now, one third of Christians are in Africa alone. Another one third of Christians are in Asia and South America. This change means that Christianity is no longer the religion of the white, rich and powerful; now, it is also the religion of the coloured, poor and oppressed. Furthermore, Christianity is not isolated from other religions. Christians of different denominations live side by side with Hindus, Buddhists, Muslims, Jews and others. This fundamental change is not often taken into



consideration, and is not a topic of clear focus in emergent cultures with regard to the Other.

Let me give you a second example. There are approximately 1.6 billion Muslims in the world. Today, 600 million of them, almost one third, live in countries and communities in India, China, Europe and America that are non-Muslim. This is a very fundamental change too and, here again, the change is not a subject of clear focus within new cultures, vis-a-vis the Other. By a new culture I mean one based on the principles of accepting and respecting differences, human dignity, freedom of conscience and freedom of belief. These principles form a bridge of conviviality, a prerequisite for peoples of different religions and of different ethnicities living together.

Bridge-building is daily, continuous work. It is not something that can ever be fully accomplished. The beauty of it is that it is a bridge between the hearts, minds and souls of people of different cultures and of different religions; a bridge that can be felt but not seen

We at KAICIID, with the guidance of our Secretary General, believe that this is a noble humanitarian mission. We have adopted the mission but we are realistic and well aware that we cannot do it alone. No other organization can do it alone, not even the United Nations. This has to be a collective human effort. This is why we at KAICIID believe that our Centre is an international hub for all organizations that share this culture of bridge-building. This conference is one of many initiatives that we have so far taken to fulfil this noble goal. I can see many among you who have already participated in our previous actions.

We are happy to continue our cooperation with you, together acknowledging that bridge-building is daily, continuous work. It is not something that can ever be fully

accomplished. The beauty of it is that it is a bridge between the hearts, minds and souls of people of different cultures and of different religions; a bridge that can be felt but not seen.

Along with my two examples of demographic change, we see a rise in fanaticism and extremism all over the world due, on one hand, to the misinterpretation of religious texts and on the other, to the rise of religious phobia, mainly Islamophobia.

Humanity needs, more than any time before, to promote the culture of religious freedom in parallel with the demographic change that is sweeping across all continents. We cannot live together in peace and harmony if we don't know the otherness of the Other. The more I give the Other a place in my heart and soul, the more I understand them and the better I understand myself. In this way, KAICIID understands both you and itself better. It is an organization based on religious and cultural plurality and dedicated to promoting this culture with you, and for you, all over the world. If we succeed, it is your success and if we do not, the mercy of God is the bridge between what we think is good and what we do.

Dr. Mohammad Sammak
Secretary General, National Committee for Christian-Muslim Dialogue

For Dr. Sammak, dialogue is a way of life. It is the accomplishment of building bridges between peoples of different religions and cultures, and the art of searching for the truth in the point of view of the Other.

Career Summary

- ❖ Secretary General of Lebanon's National Committee for Christian-Muslim Dialogue
- ❖ Secretary General of the Islamic spiritual Summit (Sunni-Shiite-Druze-Alawite) in Lebanon
- ❖ Secretary of the Arab Group for Christian-Muslim Dialogue
- ❖ Member of the Board of Presidents of the World Conference Religion for Peace, New York
- ❖ Writer and political commentator for prominent newspapers such as *Al-Ittihad*, Abu Dhabi, and *Al-Mustaqbal*, Beirut; and author of 30 books.



CHAPTER IX

Conference Recommendations

Conference Recommendations

During the conference, participants broke into working groups to discuss the main session topics. Results were presented before the plenary in the closing session, with the following recommendations made.

Social media as a space for dialogue

- ❖ When seeking to promote dialogue on social media, we need to focus on building bridges through compassion and peaceful communication.
- ❖ Information, media literacy, ethics and critical thinking are prerequisites for responsible social media use.
- ❖ Social media is just one tool in the communications toolbox. Therefore it is also important to network with other institutions with common areas of interest, including traditional media and education.
- ❖ We should work to develop strategies to pressure online platforms to act in socially responsible ways.
- ❖ Ignorance is the main cause of hate speech. It is caused by a lack of information, misinformation/disinformation, and cognitive dissonance
 - It is important to know the who, what, where and how of communication, including the issues at stake, the narratives addressing them, the influencers involved, and the channels and tools available for use.
- ❖ We need to build credibility as voices of peace. One should listen before engaging, piggyback on multipliers, and then finally contribute with one's own message.
- ❖ It is important to build capacity through the use of marketing skills, analytical tools, the engagement of creative communities, and the involvement of schools and universities.

Interreligious education and common citizenship

- ❖ Many religious leaders have not met followers of other religions, and education for religious leaders sometimes lacks good, or any, instruction on other faiths. For instance, one participant noted that his institution spent only 0.6 per cent of the course programme on the history of other Abrahamic religions.
- ❖ Education materials and approaches need to be based on diversity and coexistence, and free of hatred and stereotypes. This can be achieved through collaboration between civil society organizations, faith-based organizations and government bodies.

- ❖ Alienation and non-integration are important factors in the emergence of extremism and terrorism. Integration does not mean abandoning identity and religion, but rather contributing successfully as a positively participating member of society.

Our quest today should be about how relevant organizations play an optimal role in implementing curricula to help us live together in peace. We need to build institutional capacity to put common citizenship and coexistence into education

- ❖ All theological institutions either encourage or show interest in interreligious education and common citizenship. Therefore it is important to develop a formal religious discourse based on peace, coexistence and social cohesion.
- ❖ Religious groups should proactively make efforts to include interreligious education in school curricula, aiming to:
 - Enable learners of all ages to have an authentic and reliable source of knowledge, spiritual orientation and familiarity with their own religion
 - Educate about other faiths from the perspective of those faiths
 - Foster an attitude of acceptance towards other religions, taking into account the society in which the students are living
 - Lessen tensions arising between conflicting identities, and help youth take a place in pluralistic society
 - Provide a safe space for dialogue, where young people's concerns can be heard in order to prevent feelings of ostracization and potential extremism.



- Build bridges between school, community, parents and religious institutions; and the state in cases where refugees may be struggling to adapt to the prevailing system.
- ❖ People need to be confident in their own beliefs before they will be open to engaging in dialogue with others. If one is insecure, one will not engage effectively in dialogue.
- ❖ It is important to begin by training a generation of trainers, teachers and religious leaders to teach the principles of coexistence and social cohesion.

Social cohesion

- ❖ It is important to actively promote the involvement of women, as well as ethnic minorities, including indigenous people, in dialogue initiatives and link them with religious leaders and policymakers, to foster social cohesion.
- ❖ It is important for religious leaders to play a proactive role against violence in the name of religion rather than being firefighters.

- ❖ It is important for religious leaders to take a strong stand against violations of common values, particularly violations of human rights and human dignity.
- ❖ We should continue to invest in inter- and intra-faith training to encourage people to learn more about their own religion.
- ❖ We should share and disseminate successful interreligious dialogue initiatives and stories from the field.
- ❖ We should encourage experience sharing between the various interreligious dialogue platforms from different countries.
- ❖ Other programmes that religious leaders, institutions and policymakers could partner to foster social cohesion include advocacy training; joint initiatives on the ground in crisis situations; gender-sensitive programmes; initiatives to protect religious and ethnic minority groups; exchange-sharing visits; training on interreligious dialogue and peacebuilding; and supporting civil society initiatives through small grant schemes.



Appendices

Bhai Sahib
Mohinder Singh
KAICIID Advisory Forum

Founding Document

Interreligious Platform for Dialogue and Cooperation In The Arab World

February 26, 2018

We, the leaders and religious institutions from all over the Arab world, gathered at the invitation of the King Abdullah Bin Abdulaziz International Centre for Interreligious and Intercultural Dialogue (KAICIID), in our belief and awareness of:

- ❖ The painful events that the Arab world has been experiencing for two decades have given rise to real threats to the diversity of the social fabric. Furthermore, these events are an actual threat to coexistence and cohesion among the religious and ethnic components of the region.
- ❖ The importance of the role of religious leaders and institutions as well as stakeholders who engage in dialogue in fostering social cohesion, coexistence and a culture of citizenship which nurtures pluralism and diversity.
- ❖ The urgent need for a regional mechanism to coordinate efforts, develop action strategies and programs that promote a culture of dialogue and a moderate religious discourse which advocates coexistence and openness and instils values of pluralism and diversity.
- ❖ The importance of reviving and employing the legacy of fraternity and peaceful coexistence among followers of religions and cultures in the region.
- ❖ The need to guarantee the fundamental rights and dignity of human beings, regardless of their religious, cultural and ethnic affiliation.

To achieve these goals we — God willing — are determined to:

- ❖ Do our utmost to spare our communities the scourge of war and violence, especially the violence committed in the name of religion and to protect them from the dangers of fanaticism, extremism and religious ostracism, while instilling the values of dialogue and peaceful coexistence and affirming the foundations of common citizenship.
- ❖ Unite our efforts to achieve our common goals and contribute effectively to face the current challenges and consolidate social peace and cohesion in the region.
- ❖ Work together to enhance moderation and

understanding between peoples and social segments through a deep, meaningful and sincere dialogue based on the willingness to coexist and collaborate.

- ❖ Synergize our efforts to foster an inclusive environment for religious, ethnic and cultural diversity.

For this purpose, we are forming a formal body for cooperation whereby it will be the umbrella for implementation and effective collaboration with cooperation of KAICIID, to design and implement programmes and projects aiming at:

- ❖ Enhancing the communication amongst religious leaders and institutions as well as stakeholders who engage in dialogue and coordinating the efforts to stand up to the challenges facing the Arab societies.
- ❖ Strengthening the relationship between religious leaders and institutions and policy makers at the national, regional and international levels to achieve the humanitarian objectives contained in this document.
- ❖ Developing action plans and specific programs that contribute to fostering peaceful coexistence and enhancing a shared citizenship at both the local and regional levels.
- ❖ Cooperating with religious leaders, their institutions and stakeholders who engage in dialogue in order to provide them with all that is necessary to promote dialogue amongst their communities and strengthen their capacities and performance to fulfil their mission.

In our capacity as founding members we declare:

- 1 The establishment of a comprehensive framework of cooperation named “Interreligious Platform for Dialogue and Cooperation in the Arab World”.
- 2 Our full commitment to this founding document and our active desire to work sincerely and diligently to bring the platform into action and achieve its objectives.
- 3 The initiation of work to realize this project, based on our religious and humanitarian teachings and values and according to the commandment of our conscience and our national duty; praying to God Almighty to help us live up to our historic responsibilities during this critical period.

Vienna Declaration

United Against Violence in the Name of Religion

November 19, 2014

Under the auspices of the King Abdullah Bin Abdulaziz International Centre for Interreligious and Intercultural Dialogue, high-level representatives of the major world religious and social institutions have gathered to agree on programs and initiatives that contribute to strengthening the unity against violence in the name of religion to support religious and cultural diversity in Iraq and Syria.

Because the multi-religious nature, KAICIID and its diverse board is an example for commitment to preserving religious and cultural diversity, and unequivocally reject all forms of violent actions, especially the ones that are committed in the name of religion. The centre strives to foster dialogue and to strengthen the foundations of citizenship. KAICIID desires to enhance the spirit of moderation, and to establish purposeful and sincere dialogue founded upon the principles of coexistence, mutual understanding and cooperation.

Although conflicts in the world over the past two decades in various regions have caused tremendous grief for us, we recognize that the ramifications of this current conflict have dangerously expanded and targeted the followers of every religion--Muslims, Christians and others. We unanimously denounce these destructive actions wherever they may occur. We especially condemn the harrowing and treacherous events that have recently occurred in the Middle East, particularly in Iraq and Syria.

We reject violence in all its forms especially the violence perpetuated in the name of religion because we believe escalating violence and destruction ultimately destroy the entire foundation for social cohesion. In the wake of such losses, there have been hundreds of thousands of casualties—innocent men, women, and children—as well as millions of refugees who have fled or have been forcefully uprooted, exposed to injustice, and driven from their homes. The homelands left behind are scarred, as well, because communities are fragmented by violence and war.

As leaders of various religious and faith traditions, we must oppose persecution inflicted on all the components of the social fabric especially Christians, Yazidis and other religious and ethnic groups such as Turkmen and Shabak in

Iraq and Syria. Persecution of people, violating their sanctity as the case of Yazidi women and enslaving the people are ways contrary to every human conscience. Persecution and execution of people who exercise their basic human right to worship as they choose contradict noble religious ideals, as well as tear the fabric of civilization, nullifying past humanitarian gains. The effort of many religious leaders over the years to establish a shared ethic of peaceful coexistence between all the segments of the Iraqi and Syrian societies, Christians, Muslims, Yazidis, Turkmen and Shabak.

And, because of the exposition of Islam’s teachings, the Muslims’ values, and civilizational role to a mutilation by extremist groups, which manipulate religion in the service of justifying its killing and destruction against Muslims and others and destructing conducts by harming the innocents, defiling states and their sovereignty, demolishing religious shrines and worshipping places, and imposing hegemonic rules and laws over citizens. These actions which stem from strange ideas that are totally incompatible with our cultures and history, contrast with the genuine Islamic teachings, and destroy the connections, not just between the followers of diverse religions, but also among the followers of the same faith.

Clearly, the region is in a fragile period of history, and the international and regional complexities of these circumstances are not easily understood, nor solved. Perhaps, the first step is to listen to the appeal of the displaced, the orphans, the widows, and the bereaved. We have gathered today as religious authorities from the Arab countries and the world, in the presence of high level governmental, intergovernmental, and civil society officials to affirm the common bond of the right of every human to follow one’s own faith without fear of death or destruction. We raise a joint plea to the powerful and almighty God to strengthen us to shoulder our responsibility at this moment in history. In the shadow of these difficult circumstances, we remain sincere in our convictions, true to our religious teachings and mindful of our humanitarian values.

We gather together to listen to each other, and to think together about possibilities for cooperation to transform the crisis. It is through dialogue and the strengthening of our

mutual values of citizenship, that the windows of hope and aspiration will be opened. We must tear down the barriers of fear, holding grudges and injustice, which divide people and eliminate their dreams and hopes of peace.

We gather together to declare in a unanimous voice, and to abide by the following principles and initiatives:

The Principles

- 1 We commit ourselves to adopt dialogue as the primary and most potent for resolving conflicts and disagreements, and to support initiatives and institutions that consider dialogue the best method for constructing national peace, coexistence and promotion of common citizenship.
- 2 We explicitly and completely condemn the serious violation of human rights in Iraq and Syria. We share the indignation of those who have suffer these grave injustices and arbitrary abuse. Regardless a person's chosen religious tradition, they are entitled to be treated humanely and with dignity. Unchecked mass murder and bloody conflict are correctly categorized as crimes against humanity. We also reject and denounce supporting or sponsoring terrorism. We appeal to the world's leaders and governments, the League of Arab States, the Conference of Islamic Cooperation and the UN Security Council to intervene with the appropriate methods to stop these crimes and to end the conflicts that are destructive to people and to civilization alike. Nothing justifies violating civilians or threatening their lives and livelihood.
- 3 We declare our solidarity with all who are oppressed due to these events, especially those who have been uprooted and displaced from their homes and homelands. We call upon relevant political powers and international community to spare no effort to restore these people to their cities and villages, and to return their houses and normal living conditions. Further, we call upon all countries who are involved in some way with this struggle, together with the international community and its international organizations to find a rapid and appropriate solution to the issue of refugees in Iraq and Syria. We call upon the world to help countries in which the current situation is threatening stability and creating a crisis in securing the necessary resources for the entire population to survive.

- 4 Together we repudiate all exploitation of religion in political conflict and the usurpation of religious symbols by extremists used as a means for segregation and a cause for injustice and oppression. At every official spiritual and public level, we reject the fractured teaching and defamation of values within Islam, especially by those who claim Islamic ruler-ship in Iraq and Syria and their followers. We invite all people of faith and good will to condemn these practices and to stand united against these tactics.
- 5 We assert that every religious, ethnic, cultural or linguistic heritage is an irreplaceable and an inherent part of the Arab culture, rooted in its history, and contributes to the vibrancy and diversity of the fabric of those communities. We also affirm that each person is vital to the future of these countries as they coexist equally with the same rights and duties to create solidarity between the Muslims and the Christians in the Middle East. Therefore, we call for the preservation of this diversity in the Arabic societies, which has been our legacy for several millennia. Diversity is both a cultural prerogative and an authentic source that reflects the different elements comprising the national identity. We proclaim the imperative need for Christians, Muslims, and other cultural and religious components to become a cohesive unit in Arab societies.
- 6 Building upon the past experience of Christian-Muslim coexistence, despite all of the disturbances, relapses and imperfect conduct throughout history, we affirm that this very coexistence is one of the main pillars of the Arab civilization, and serves as evidence of the mutually beneficial relationship between Muslims and Christians.
- 7 We call for all people to honour-without hesitation or reservation--the human rights and freedoms of every group. We request special attention be given to freedom of belief and freedom of practicing religious rites, because these are prerequisites to protecting freedom diversity and promoting dialogue. We also stress the necessity of adopting the concept of joint citizenship, which embraces diversity and deems it foundational to executing justice and peace within societies. Peace and justice cannot be attained without regard for the rule of law and governing bodies. In addition, the role of religious institutions, in collaboration with other societal institutions, are

necessary for developing citizenship by means of defining the qualities of citizenship and spreading positive values.

- 8 Firmly clinging to hope despite the difficulties we are facing, we must not despair or cease from the work of peace-building, and arriving at an appropriate mutual understanding between the followers of diverse religions. We appeal to all people of faith and good will, striving to build a more cooperative and peaceful world, to adopt these commitments and to work with us jointly toward achieving this goal.

The Initiatives

- 1 We commit ourselves to conveying our stand against violence in the name of religion through this declaration. We want our collective, unified voice to be heard by political and religious leaders and governments in the region, and we are extending to all the invitation to make peace and stability a priority. We are in agreement about the principles we have put forth, and we will follow up with leaders about our commitment to these ideals through consistent communication.
- 2 We commit ourselves to the reinforcement and support of the initiatives and institutions promoting dialogue, and to the development of programs which seek to impact all people with the message of dialogue and peace. We are particularly concerned about the youth in schools and universities, since it is the young who are the ones most targeted by terrorist groups. We request that partners from government and organizations join with us in our concerted efforts in this regard, so that broader and more significant impact toward solidifying the culture of dialogue within societies can occur.
- 3 We call for an end to discourse which does not value diversity and respect for those who are different, culturally or religiously. All forms of extremism, hyperbole, blaspheming and violence must be removed from our communications. The concentration of our communication must be on the values of justice, peace, respect of differences and acceptance of the other. We will work toward launching an initiative that empowers political and religious institutions, as well as decision-makers, to adopt, and seriously support the adoption of, the discourse of dialogue and common citizenship. In addition, we call for launching an initiative that

provides some legal means for addressing the discourse of confessionalist instigation.

- 4 We recognize the primary role of media in influencing public opinion and cultural interconnectedness. Regrettably, there has been an expansion of divisive discourse that appears on TV, online, in social media. In response to this reality, we pledge to encourage private media companies — Muslim and Christian alike — to work toward spreading the message of peace, respecting differences, seeking justice and engaging in dialogue. We intend to work together to support a special campaign through a multi-faceted media marketing plan in order to shed light on the positive aspects of our dialogue initiatives, and to promote the concepts of dialogue, joint citizenship and the culture of accepting the other. We will strive to share this message to the broadest audience possible.
- 5 We have profound appreciation for the role interreligious education plays in the formation of future generations. We are working diligently to ensure every child and young person is able to encounter the message of peace. To this end, we seek to review educational programs and textbooks, in collaboration with the concerned authorities, to see that appropriate introductions are available regarding the message of peace and dialogue toward the goal of understanding joint citizenship and coexistence.
- 6 We invite for endorsing the pioneering initiatives in the sectors of dialogue, reconciliation and citizenship-reinforcement, and we call for mainstreaming its framework through the entire Arab world. One of these initiatives is the initiative that is being launched by the Centre of King Abdullah, which focuses on dialogue for the sake of strengthening the notion of joint citizenship and seeks to become a connecting bridge between the various other initiatives in the region.
- 7 It is our desire to launch a permanent interreligious committee and working groups from various dialogue and interreligious institutions to follow up on the implementation of the conference recommendations, and to continue future coordination to enhance our collective capacity to react to the ongoing violence in the name of religion that has swept Iraq and Syria, and threatens the entire region.

Athens Declaration

United against violence in the name of religion: supporting the citizenship rights of Christians, Muslims, and other religious and ethnic groups in the Middle East

September 3, 2015

We Christian and Muslim religious leaders have unanimously committed ourselves to encourage all initiatives and actions aimed at supporting citizenship rights of all people, Christians, Muslims and other religious and ethnic groups, in the Middle East.

The expanding conflict in the Middle East threatens religious and cultural diversity in this region. It also undermines peaceful coexistence among citizens of the region, including Christians, Muslims, and other religious and ethnic groups. Hundreds of thousands of Christians, Muslims and other religious and ethnic groups are subjected to brutal violence and horrific torment. They are forced to flee their homes. Christians, Muslims, and other religious and ethnic groups are abused and killed by violent extremists. These violent extremists' heinous acts stem from ideas that are totally incompatible with our shared cultures and history, and contradict authentic religious teachings.

These ideas harm the image of our religions. These crimes destroy fellowship between the followers of diverse religions, and among followers of the same faith. Our religions call for peace and coexistence. These are core values of our religions.

Speaking with one voice as Christian and Muslim religious authorities, we declare that the Christian and other religious and ethnic communities constitute an integral and inseparable part of the Middle East's religious and cultural diversity, are rooted in its history, and contribute to the formation of our shared Middle Eastern identity.

We denounce in the strongest terms the persecution of the Christian, other religious and ethnic communities in the Middle East. We condemn those who manipulate religion to justify violence against people of other faiths and desecrate sacred sites and symbols.

On behalf of our religious communities, we express our unshaken solidarity with Christian and other religious and ethnic communities. We pledge to work together to actively build peace with justice, and to do everything in our power to create the kind of conditions in which the Christian and other religious and ethnic communities can live in freedom

and dignity in the Middle East as full citizens.

We religious leaders jointly appeal to policymakers in the region to preserve diversity within their societies.

We religious leaders jointly appeal to policy makers and media not to associate any terrorist act committed in the name of religion with any religion, and to host credible voices to speak in the name of religion.

We also recognize and appreciate the voices raised in unison and joint initiatives launched in the region to support and strengthen the social fabric based on the principles of common citizenship.

At the local level, we religious leaders support early efforts to stem attempts to segregate religious communities and foster conflict, as well as to facilitate joint local development projects to help different communities meet, cooperate and build trust.

We call upon religious and political leaders, as well as civil society to take a strong stand against growing violent extremism and terrorism which threaten centuries of peaceful coexistence in the Middle East.

We call for the release of all hostages, abducted civilians and religious leaders, and the safe return of internally displaced persons and refugees to their homes and properties.

We commend the initiative of the Ecumenical Patriarchate, and in particular His All Holiness Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew, in convening this meeting in the context of "Dialogue between Christians and Muslims", as we support the continuing implementation of KAICIID's initiative, "United against Violence in the Name of Religion".

Endnotes

Notes for speech given by Cardinal Al-Rai, page 25

- 1 The sources of this basic study, as well as the references mentioned in the writings of the text and are the Second Vatican Ecumenical Declaration on "Relations between the Church and Non-Christian Religions" (1964) (28) (a) and 1965); International Theological Commission Document: "God the Trinity and the unity of humanity, the Christian monotheism and its opposition to violence" (6 December 2013); Declaration of the doctrine of faith: "{1} The Lord Jesus" About the Unitarian {3} Salvation and Holistic Christ and the Church (August 6, 2000); article by Javier Prades: "Christian rejection of religious violence: A Chance for All" in the journal OASIS, 20 December 2014, page 12-17.
- 2 Declaration of the Second Vatican Council: Human dignity, on religious freedom, 1.
- 3 Constituent Constitution: The Word of God, 16.
- 4 See International Theological Commission Document, 64-65.

Notes for speech given by Sheikh Muhammad Hussein, page 42

- 1 Ar-Room, Verse 22.
- 2 Al-Maaida, Verse 48.
- 3 At-Taghabun, Verse 2.
- 4 Al-Insaan, Verse 28.
- 5 Al-Baqara, Verse 256.
- 6 Al-Kafiroon.
- 7 Hud, Verse 118.
- 8 Al-Ra'd, Verse 31.
- 9 Al-Kahf, Verse 29.
- 10 Al-Mumtahana, Verse 8-9.
- 11 Malik al-Ashtar al-Naq'a'i.
- 12 Sahih Al-Bukhary, Kitab Al-Sharika.

