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**World Council
of Churches**

Fourth Annual Symposium on the Role of Religion and Faith-Based Organizations in International Affairs

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PERSPECTIVES ON MIGRATION: DISPLACEMENT AND MARGINALIZATION, INCLUSION AND JUSTICE

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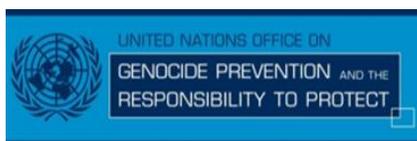
Parliament of the World's Religions

The United Nations Office on Genocide Prevention and the Responsibility to Protect

on behalf of the

United Nations Inter-Agency Task Force on Engagement with Faith-based Organizations

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United Nations Inter-Agency Task Force for Engagement with Faith-based Organizations



PERSPECTIVES ON MIGRATION: DISPLACEMENT AND MARGINALIZATION, INCLUSION AND JUSTICE

On 22 January 2018, the World Council of Churches, the General Board of Church and Society of the United Methodist Church, General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, and ACT Alliance will organize the Fourth Annual Symposium on the Role of Religion and Faith-Based Organizations in International Affairs, in partnership with the United Nations Office on Genocide Prevention and the Responsibility to Protect on behalf of the United Nations Inter-Agency Task Force on Engagement with Faith-based Organizations, the Adventist Development and Relief Agency, and Parliament of the World's Religions. The Fourth Annual Symposium will focus on migration and displacement.

JUSTIFICATION FOR THE SYMPOSIUM

I myself am a migrant, as are many of you in this room. But no one expected me to risk my life on a leaky boat or to cross a desert in the back of a truck to find employment outside my country of birth. Safe migration cannot be limited to the global elite.

Refugees, internally displaced persons and migrants are not the problem; the problem lies in conflict, persecution and hopeless poverty. I have been pained to see the way refugees and migrants have been stereotyped and scapegoated – and to see political figures stoke resentment in search of electoral gain.

In today's world, all societies are becoming multicultural, multiethnic and multi-religious. This diversity must be seen as a richness, not as a threat. But to make diversity a success, we need to invest in social cohesion, so that all people feel that their identities are respected and that they have a stake in the community as a whole.

António Guterres, UN Secretary General

Three years ago, faith-based ecumenical partners convened together with the UN Inter-Agency Task Force on Engagement with Faith-based Organizations with the intention of organizing an annual policy dialogue around the intersections of religion and international affairs from the perspective of human dignity and human rights. The first Symposium in 2015 focused specifically on these themes. The second Symposium focused on the prevention of atrocity crimes and violent extremism (2016) and the third focused on just, inclusive and

sustainable peace (2017). In 2018, the Fourth Annual Symposium will focus on the intersections of these themes with human mobility, migration and displacement.

Although mobility, migration and displacement are currently high on policy agendas from the global level to the local, the goal of a comprehensive, human-rights-based approach to migration and displacement presents difficult challenges in the current global context; a context in which migration, although a normal and largely positive feature of human development, suffers from continued polarization, and where challenges manifest themselves in policies adverse to human rights. These include the securitization of borders, ethno-centrism, nationalism, tribalism, racism, and exploitative hiring practices and working conditions for migrant workers. All of these disproportionately affect women and marginalized groups in societies. Human trafficking, including labor trafficking, is among the most serious consequences of this situation.

In September 2016, world leaders came together for the UN Summit on large movements of Refugees and Migrants. In the ambitious [New York Declaration](#), they committed themselves to produce [two global compacts](#) by the fall of 2018, one to increase international cooperation and governance of migration and the other to better share responsibility for and more effectively meet the needs of refugees.

The Symposium provides an opportunity to take stock of where that process is now and where it is headed. As individuals and communities, we can reach out, listen to and share with migrants and refugees. However, the futures of migrants and refugees and of their place in our societies is also being negotiated, for better or worse, at global, regional and national levels.

Where will we find ourselves in January 2018, on the cusp of intergovernmental negotiations on the Global Compact for Safe, Regular and Orderly Migration and the Global Compact for Refugees? What progress is being made towards a compact that will improve international cooperation and global governance of migration? What commitments to responsibility sharing and to comprehensive response frameworks in new and in protracted refugee situations are in the works? How open have these state-led processes been to participation from stakeholders—civil society, faith-based communities, migrants and refugees themselves? And have stakeholders stepped up to the challenge of mobilizing and engaging in the process?

There is wide recognition for the importance of moral engagement and solidarity in the public debate, while political leaders, policy-makers and technical experts, civil society organizations and the general public have often talked past one another, and migrants and refugees themselves are given little voice.

Although the Compact is supposed to address all aspects of migration governance in all regional and corridor contexts, in reality the agenda to date may appear at times to be

dominated by concerns with reducing numbers of unwanted migrants while simultaneously taking advantage of the availability of cheap migrant labor. This is despite the fact that the majority of migration takes place within rather than between regions, and there is more migration that is South-South than South-North. What is more, there has been little interest in tackling the fundamental issues of inequality within and between countries that drive most migration, and especially the migration of people forced by lack of decent work, loss of livelihoods, the effects of climate change, religious intolerance, including restrictions and hostility to the right to freedom of religious or belief, or the risk of or ongoing atrocity crimes.

The absence of concrete commitments from a sufficient number of countries to accept more responsibility for resettling those seeking protection continues to thwart progress, leaving the problem to countries of first asylum already struggling to cope with large numbers of refugees on their territory, often under difficult economic circumstances. This has also made several of these hosting countries less open to discussing the broader human rights situation of people on the move, including migrants as well as in the process for the Global Compact on Refugees.

This situation calls for a comprehensive, human-rights-based response to migration and displacement, one which moves beyond the current paradigm in which people are divided into different categories, viewed as more or less deserving of rights protection.

In this moment, faith-based organizations are seeking not simply to assert the rights and dignity, but also to amplify the voices of uprooted people – regardless of their category or status, as outlined in [Now and How: A Civil Society Vision for a UN Global Compact for Human Mobility and Migration in Ten Acts](#). This includes efforts to represent perspectives on migration and displacement that are shaped by the experiences of people in the Global South. And it includes recognizing the substantial contributions in the economic, social and cultural arenas be it in their home countries or countries of transit or destination.

At the policy level, the issues to be addressed include the following:

Why do people move? When their movement is forced, how can and should this be addressed in terms of mitigating the causes and in terms of protecting the individuals forced to move? What kinds of risks and rights challenges do migrants face in transit and in destination countries, and how are these gendered? How do gender inequalities (SDG 5), inequality within and between countries (SDG 10), lack of decent work (SDG 8) and the need for a minimum living wage, climate change (SDG 13) and other human security deficits, drive migration? What are the social costs of migration (including in terms of separation of families, psychosocial impacts on individuals and communities, etc.)?

Concrete actions by faith-based organizations – in humanitarian response and development cooperation, coupled with strong, rights-based advocacy– empower local communities to

access services and assert their rights, as well as grounding our inputs into global policy debates and negotiations, including at the United Nations. Concrete activities on the ground also include hands-on involvement in the reception and hosting of migrants, assistance with integration, and contributing to a welcoming atmosphere in receiving societies. At the same time, faith-based organizations are revisiting their own understandings of the historic, contemporary, and immediate challenges of migration and displacement, looking especially into the concepts and religious practices related to values such as justice, hospitality, and mercy. Many FBOs in this context are also challenged by the tension between being prophetic voices and yet wanting to engage in political processes in a relevant and goal-oriented manner.

THE FOURTH ANNUAL SYMPOSIUM

In line with the trend set by previous Symposia, this fourth one will address cooperation among faith-based organizations, UN system entities (including intergovernmental, regional, and national bodies), and other engaged regional and international non-governmental entities, in fostering safe, orderly and regular migration, as well as in providing assistance to refugees and addressing protracted refugee situations.

In view of the on-going preparations for both Global Compacts and the imminent negotiations expected to start in February 2018, this Symposium will highlight several different dimensions of migration and displacement, aiming in particular, to making an important contribution to global governance and enhanced coordination on international migration, as well as recommending a range of actionable commitments, with suggested means of implementation around cooperation. To that end, the Symposium will focus on:

a) legal and policy contexts defining UN engagement; b) religious NGOs and religious actors' roles; c) specific UN-FBO partnership initiatives; d) concrete recommendations for scaling up the global responses through UN-faith-based partnerships; e) political perspectives; and, f) development, humanitarian, and human rights frameworks, in their moral and ethical dimensions.

Gathered migrants, refugees, practitioners, policy makers and government/multilateral officials will discern and identify issues that intersect with religious, cultural, economic, and political realms and explore ways to protect the human rights of all refugees and migrants and promote their full, equal, and meaningful participation in finding sustainable solutions, including addressing their immediate survival and livelihood concerns.

The event will also highlight the importance of addressing the risk of atrocity crimes in forced migration contexts as well as of countering racism and xenophobia against refugees and migrants in destination countries.

STRUCTURED DISCUSSIONS

The Symposium will be divided into five sections:

- a. General Introduction on the situation
- b. Panel on rule of law and political perspectives (4-5 people)
- c. Panel on development, humanitarian, and human rights perspectives (4-5 people)
- d. Panel on moral and ethical dimensions (4-5 people)
- e. Conclusion and way forward

SPEAKERS COMPOSITION

Each panel will have an introductory remark followed by 4-5 interventions on the topic. Speakers will include refugees and migrants themselves, inter-religious representatives, member state representatives, UN system, the European Union (EU) and international organizations.

PARTICIPANTS

Approximately 250 participants from Member States, United Nations agencies, faith-based organizations and wider civil society