



2018

**ANNUAL REPORT OF THE UNITED NATIONS INTER-
AGENCY TASK FORCE ON ENGAGING FAITH-BASED
ACTORS FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT**

**ENGAGING WITH RELIGION AND FAITH-BASED ACTORS ON
AGENDA 2030/THE SDGs**



This Annual Report documents the activities, initiatives and efforts undertaken by diverse UN system entities, members of the United Nations Interagency Task Force on Religion and Sustainable Development. None of the opinions expressed here reflect those of the United Nations system, its member entities, Governing Board(s) or territory/territories.

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INTRODUCTION

This report provides an overview of the engagement with faith-based actors and faith-related activities by the UN system members of the *United Nations Inter-Agency Task Force on Religion and Sustainable Development* (short: UN Task Force on Religion/IATF-Religion) covering 2018.

The UN Task Force on Religion and Development consists of the following members:

1. Chair/Convenor: UNFPA (United Nations Population Fund)
2. OGPRtoP (UN Office of the Secretary General's Special Adviser on the Prevention of Genocide and the Responsibility to Protect)
3. UNAIDS (Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS)
4. UNAOC (United Nations Alliance of Civilizations)
5. UN CTC (United Nations Security Council Counter-Terrorism Committee)
6. UN DESA (United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs)
7. UNDP (United Nations Development Programme)
8. UNDPI (United Nations Department of Public Information)
9. UNESCO (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization)
10. UNEP (United Nations Environmental Programme)
11. UN Habitat (United Nations Human Settlements Programme)
12. UNHCR (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees)
13. UNICEF (United Nations Children's Fund)
14. UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Right (UNOHCHR)
15. UNV (United Nations Volunteers)
16. UN Women (United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women)
17. World Bank Group (WB)
18. WFP (World Food Programme)
19. WHO (World Health Organization)

FOREWORD - EXCERPT FROM A LETTER TO THE UNITED NATIONS SECRETARY GENERAL, FROM THE FAITH ADVISORY COUNCIL OF THE UN INTERAGENCY TASK FORCE ON RELIGION

When the UN Task Force members approached our respective institutions, based on our own suggestions, to form an Advisory Council, 30 of us were quick to come together with an unequivocal commitment to support the United Nations system, in its efforts to uphold human rights and safeguard human dignity. This commitment is mirrored in, and through, the Sustainable Development Goals.

Below is an excerpt from a letter we sent to the UN Secretary-General Mr. Antonio Guterres, on December 2017.

“The United Nations Interagency Task Force ...is the only UN inter-agency mechanism to support the UN system in its attempts to deliver critical work with sensitivity to, and an appreciation of, the role(s) of religion.

We represent diverse religious traditions, regional and thematic competencies, a gender balance, and a track record of sustained service to our respective communities, countries and the United Nations. Between us, we work in almost all corners of the world, on each and every SDG area. Each of us is a legally registered entity in different countries, most hold consultative status with ECOSOC, and each of our organisations maintains and operates according to a strict regimen of accountability and transparency.

We convened for the first time on September 21, 2018, alongside the UN General Assembly. On that date, we also co-hosted, together with the UN Task Force, the “Kofi Annan UNGA Faith Briefings” for Member States and UN system entities. We intend the Briefings to be a space in which we can reflect critically on, and showcase the partnerships between, faith actors and the UN system, i.e. an embodiment of SDG 17.

As representatives of various faith-based and faith-inspired entities working on human rights, sustainable development and peace and security, we are proud to work with the UN Interagency Task Force as to support the UN system, and to do so through the secretariat of the UN Interagency Task Force on Religion. We offer our collective wisdom, presence, and experiences, such that we may uphold and advance, together, the values, principles and commitments to human rights, peace and security and sustainable development, as agreed to by the Member States of the United Nations... We do so with a determination to continue to work together to serve, to amplify and uplift faith-inspired civil society advocacy and partnerships for the SDGs”.

A full list of our organisations, and the Report of the Kofi Annan Faith Briefings, are attached to this Annual Report of the UN Interagency Task Force.

SIGNED [on behalf of all of the Faith Advisory Council Members]:

Chair: Ms Tarja Kantola, Chair, Finn Church Aid,

Chair: Mr. Faisal Bin Muammar, Secretary General, KAICIID (King Abdullah Center for Interreligious and Intercultural Dialogue)

Vice Chair: Ms. Sadhvi Bhagawati Saraswathi, Global Interfaith WASH Alliance

Vice Chair: Mr. Jonathan Duffy, President, ADRA (Adventist Development and Relief Agency)

JOINT ACTIVITIES OF THE UN TASK FORCE MEMBERS IN 2018

The UN Task Force on Religion's members have continued to jointly engage on key areas of advocacy, capacity building and knowledge management. The work with the over 500+ faith-based NGO partners which the diverse UN system offices have continued at national, regional and global levels. What will be shared here is a synopsis of the key highlights of these joint activities which took place at the global level, with a focus on UN headquarters in New York given the majority of Task Force UN members' location.

Advocacy Highlights

In January of 2018, the Task Force, co-led by the UN Office for Genocide Prevention and the United Nations Population Fund/UNFPA, together with the World Council of Churches, the ACT Alliance and the United Methodist Commission for Justice and Peace, co-hosted the **4th Annual Symposium on Religion and International Affairs**.

In March, the UN Task Force, co-led by UNFPA and UN Women, with Islamic Relief, the World Council of Churches, and ACT Alliance, co-hosted and co-organised several side events during the UN Commission on the Status of Women.

In April, the UN Task Force, led by UNFPA, hosted a **Strategic Planning Retreat** with 17 UN system entities and 40 top FBO partners representing all major world religions. The Retreat outcomes included a call for the formation of the Advisory Council, and agreed to joint advocacy events each year, featuring partnerships around gender justice, environment, peacebuilding, and migration.

In June, the UN Task Force, with UNFPA's leadership, collaborated with the European Union's DEVCO, to host a Special Event – a Debate - during the [European Development Days](#). [The Debate was entitled “What’s Religion Got To Do with It?”](#) The Debate was attended by hundreds of EDD participants.

In July, the UN Task Force, led by UNFPA, co-hosted, with the Mission of Ireland to the UN and the [Joint Learning Initiative on Faith and Local Communities/JLI LFC](#), a side event at the High Level Political Forum, on the Role of FBOs in Realising Agenda 2030. The discussions, which involved both religious leaders, as well as CEOs of faith-based and faith-inspired developmental entities, such as - highlighted evidence of the value-added of partnering with faith communities on the SDG themes under discussion.

In September, the UN Task Force, co-led by 5 UN system entities, convened and launched its first **Multi-Faith Advisory Council**. The Advisory Council is composed of the Chief Executive Officers of 28 faith-based NGOs (FBOs) common partners to most of the UN system. The Faith Advisory Council is formed to advise the UN system entities on engaging with religious actors to realize Agenda 2030 and seek to endorse the UN's multilateral support for all human rights. The Council member organisations represent a balanced representation between religions, regions, gender and thematic areas.

As their first joint initiative, the Council Members launched the Annual [UNGA Kofi Annan Faith Briefings](#). These Briefings convene the UN system’s faith-based and faith-inspired partners on a yearly basis to brief the UN system and Member States on progress on Agenda 2030, as well as key concerns and areas of work of religious actors linked to the UN’s mandates around human rights, peace and security and sustainable development¹.

In November, the UN Interagency Task Force was represented and spoke at the Parliament of World Religions in Toronto, by a diverse group of its members, including UNAIDS, UNDP, UNEP, UNFPA, UNICEF and UN Women.

Capacity Building Highlights

The Task Force on Religion provided two Strategic Learning Exchanges (SLEs) on Religion, Development and Diplomacy. Each of these SLEs relies on a peer-to-peer learning methodology, is co-convened by the UN Task Force with its FBO, governmental and intergovernmental partners, and relies on actual evidence-based discussions informed by case studies submitted by both the UN and the FBOs. A regional SLE was provided in Jordan, in March, for the Arab states, and was attended by 65 participants from religious institutions, Ministries of Religious Affairs, religious NGOs, and 7 UN system entities. The Amman SLE was co-hosted by the [Jordanian Hashemite Charity Organisation \(JHCO\)](#), and co-convened with the [International Partnership on Religion and Sustainable Development \(PaRD\)](#), together with several FBOs, including [World Vision International](#) and [ACT Alliance](#).

A second global Strategic Learning Exchange was provided in NY in November. This had 80 participants (with 10 UN offices including UN Women which was co-convenor). Cosponsors of this SLE included the Jewish Theological Seminary’s Milstein Center, Princeton University’s Office of Religion and Public Life, the World Council of Churches, Islamic Relief-USA, World Vision International, and the Transatlantic Partnership Network on Religion and Diplomacy (TPNRD).

The Task Force, with UNFPA’s support, hosted an annual meeting of the Transatlantic Partnership Network on Religion and Diplomacy (TPNRD), also in November, with EU Ambassadors’ and focal points on religion in respective European Ministries of Foreign Affairs. TPNRD is hosted by/in Cambridge University in this meeting formally launched its Academic Council, which brings together some of the intellectual hubs on religion and diplomacy from North America and western Europe.

Resources/Publications

- ❖ IATF Report 2013-2015: [Highlights of FBO Engagement by United Nations Entities 2013-2015](#) (UN IATF, 2015)
- ❖ [Realizing the Faith Dividend: Religion, Gender, Peace and Security in Agenda 2030](#) (UNFPA, 2016)

¹ The faith Advisory Council List of Members is attached as an Annex to this Annual Report

- ❖ [United Nations Inter-agency Consultation on Engagement with Faith-based Organizations: Proceedings Report](#) (UNFPA, 9 July 2008)
- ❖ [Global Forum of Faith-based Organisations for Population and Development](#) (UNFPA, 2009)

Latest relevant Report of the Secretary-General:

- ❖ [Promotion of a culture of peace and interreligious and intercultural dialogue, understanding and cooperation for peace](#) (A/73/251, September 2018)



Source: UNFPA

IATF-RELIGION AND DEVELOPMENT CHAIR: THE UNITED NATIONS POPULATION FUND (UNFPA)

Together with and also on behalf of the UN Task Force, UNFPA convenes consultations with faith-based actors, Member States, and secular civil society partners, during key intergovernmental fora (e.g. World Interfaith Harmony Week, the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW), the Commission on Population and Development, the High Level Political Forum and the General Assembly).

For this 2017 Report, UNFPA has chosen to focus on one highlight from the global level, and mention a few key highlights from different countries.

Highlights

Global Advocacy

In addition to co-hosting and co-organising on behalf of the UN Task Force, UNFPA organized two Side Events to 51st Commission on Population and Development – (CPD), together, alternately with the Permanent Missions of Sweden, Norway and Malawi, the World Council of Churches, the ACT Alliance (with Church of Sweden and Norwegian Church Aid), Islamic Relief-USA, IPPF-Sweden, and Musawah. The side events succeeded in launching the (inter) Faith for SRHR (sexual and reproductive health and rights) Network which features a commitment across all faith traditions to work to further the historic Call to Action statement made alongside the UN General Assembly in 2014, to work together with UNFPA and other partners to realize SRHR as an essential enabler of Agenda 2030.

Highlights of UNFPA Country Level Engagement

UNFPA invests in national dialogues with stakeholders including traditional and religious communities working to harness the demographic dividend; promote human rights and empowerment of women, combat gender based violence (GBV) and child marriage; and promote access to sexual and reproductive health (SRH), including family planning (FP). UNFPA country offices manage ongoing partnerships with various government departments, religious bodies and civil society to foster social cohesion. These two examples cover countries previously uncovered in Task Force Annual Reports representing a majority Christian and a majority Muslim country.

The Conference of African Traditional and Religious Leaders on Girl's Education took place in Abuja, Nigeria, on 14 and 15 January 2019, organized by UNFPA's Regional office for **Western and Central Africa**. The meeting brought together influential Traditional and Religious leaders from across sub-Saharan Africa to discuss the importance of keeping girls in school to complete 12 years of secondary education, as well as gain livelihood skills. H.E. President Mahammadu Buhari, the President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, opened the meeting, in which the Sultan of Sokoto, UNICEF and Dangote Foundation also spoke.

The leading traditional/religious leaders in Nigeria, namely the Sultan of Sokoto and the Emir of Kano, emerged as champions for sensitive issues such as family planning, girl's education, and protecting women from all forms of violence. The meeting showcased the fruit of UNFPA's longterm commitment to engaging with religious and traditional leaders, and the increasing viability of such critical cultural agents of change to serve as champions of sensitive agenda at the grassroots levels, and seek to transform social norms.

UNFPA **Honduras** worked with its Interreligious Committee (during 2007 to 2010 this Committee worked on HIV and AIDS prevention) to focus attention on prevention of teenage pregnancies. UNFPA serves as a facilitating entity and as a coordination mechanism for the execution of the actions of the different organizations based on faith. In Honduras this Ecumenical Committee is made up of the Evangelical Cofraternity, the Adventist Church, the Episcopal Church, the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, the Christian Reformed Church, and the Latin American Council of Churches. 2017-2018 collaboration resulted in a jointly developed manual, "*Adolescents with Purpose*", with information on adolescent pregnancy, its causes and consequences, and explanations of sexuality as understood in religious text and praxis. The manual advocates for the wisdom of postponement of sexual relations in adolescents, while also providing information on where and how to seek information and access youth and adolescent-friendly health centers to help in preventing pregnancies and sexually transmitted infections. In 2019, this manual will be the main focus of a major national launch event with governmental engagement, and a training of trainers (ToT) which UNFPA will co-facilitate with the Interreligious Committee, such that the different Churches are enabled to train and engage a wider pool of FBOs.

UNFPA **Kazakhstan** partners with religious leaders and faith-based organizations (FBOs) of the two dominant religious communities - Sunni Islam and Orthodox Christianity - since 2012. As a result of UNFPA's efforts, religious leaders of Sunni Islam and Orthodox Christianity in Kazakhstan are engaged as Champion advocates for and dissemination of information on maternal health, prevention of HIV and GBV, and early marriages for their

followers and congregation. Informational, educational and communication (IEC) materials addressing maternal health, women's and girls' sexual and reproductive health and Gender Based Violence issues, including early marriage, were developed with their active involvement. The IEC materials supported with quotations from each religion's respective teachings and doctrines were approved by heads of religious organizations, translated into

UNFPA Kazakhstan's work affirms the possibility of creating common ground with conservative religious leaders to ensure strengthened implementation of the Agenda of the International Conference on Population and Development (ICDP). From 2017 - 2018, UNFPA provided technical assistance for the development of training materials, and hosting actual capacity building events, around/on these topics, owned and organised by the FBO partners. UNFPA has tracked visible progress on religious engagement around these sensitive issues in 2018, by noting the number of religious leaders, previously objecting to UNFPA's work, now publicly acknowledging collaboration not only with UNFPA, but also with the government and secular NGOs. In addition, the position of the Russian Orthodox Church - in terms of its stated readiness to support issues of counteracting gender-based violence, advocate for safe motherhood, and overcome stigma and discrimination of people with HIV and other marginalized population groups (while remaining steadfast in rejecting issues of protected sex to avoid unwanted pregnancies), is also changing.

In the context of high rates of prenatal sex selection in favor of boys, UNFPA **Azerbaijan** identified community faith leaders as key actors of change in communities. FBOs are helping UNFPA reach the most conservative and marginalized groups of population who are more prone to practice sex selective abortions due to patriarchal views and the social-economic situation. As a result, UNFPA was able to raise awareness on the value of the girl child in the family and society from the perspective of Islam, thus contributing to prevention of gender-based sex selection. Through dialogue and educational sessions with formal and non-formal faith leaders, UNFPA established good and sustainable partners for continuous advocacy through the implementation of Friday prayers and speeches at the mosques.

In **Armenia**, UNFPA is successfully engaging Armenian Apostolic Church in a long-standing partnership to tackle the issue of social and cultural stereotypes about gender equality, and prevent GBV. UNFPA helps educate faith leaders and, through them, communities, on gender issues and domestic violence prevention. Together with FBOs, the CO organized projects in communities, at schools, in the army, to prevent GBV and gender inequality including prenatal sex selection.

In **Belarus**, UNFPA works with the Belarusian Orthodox Church to increase awareness on domestic violence. The partnership resulted in a wide and strong network of faith leaders throughout the country capable of delivering messaging of non-violence in their communities. These faith leaders were all unified through the national referral mechanism for domestic violence. A counselling cell and emergency accommodation were also established with the Church, to support women and children, who could access social, psychological and pastoral counselling.

In **Bosnia-Herzegovina** (BiH), for many of the uncounted survivors of sexual violence during the 1992–1995 war, the trauma they suffered is compounded to this day by the

stigma they still face in their own families and communities. To tackle this, beginning in 2017 faith leaders took a strong stand against such social exclusion, marginalization and discrimination. The Inter-religious Council in BiH, representing Muslims, Orthodox Serbs, Catholics and Jews, issued a landmark declaration that condemned sexual violence as “one of the most severe crimes committed in conflict”; denounced the stigmatization of survivors; and called for “constructive cooperation...in order to improve the status of survivors in BiH today”. UNFPA also collaborates with FBOs in providing direct counselling to survivors of sexual violence, their families and entire communities as a way to foster acceptance, non-discrimination and a sustainable reduction in stigmatization.

UNFPA **Georgia** works with Muslim faith leaders against child/early marriages and genital mutilation. An important achievement was the adoption of a statement by high level Muslim faith leadership that strongly supported prevention and elimination of early/child/forced marriages and female genital mutilation. In addition, Georgia, along with Armenia, Azerbaijan, Bangladesh, Nepal and Viet Nam, is part of the [*Global Programme to Prevent Son Preference and Gender-Biased Sex Selection*](#), which works with various partners, including FBOs, to address the issue of sex selection.

Given the increasingly important role that religious leaders play in the country, UNFPA **Kyrgyzstan** is collaborating with FBOs, local authorities and health professionals to support health, family well-being and peace-building. UNFPA builds capacities of religious leaders and engages them in public dialogue and community counselling on issues related to RH. UNFPA was also able to introduce the first secular subject in religious education and is at the stage of finalizing the inclusion of health issues in the curriculum of religious schools.

UNFPA is working with the Religious Affairs Committee of **Tajikistan**, enabling both female and male Muslim faith leaders to communicate accurate information about HIV, and SRH. Including of SRH related themes into Friday prayers coupled with the broadcasting of radio and TV programmes has allowed for reaching out to even the most conservative groups in Tajikistan with messages on prevention of HIV and STIs. An important achievement was the proposal to the Religious Affairs Committee in Tajikistan to introduce a special faculty for continuous education of faith leaders; the Government of Tajikistan is currently reviewing the proposal.

The collaboration between UNFPA and the Presidency of Religious Affairs of **Turkey** spanning more than 5 years was successful in preparing religious leaders as advocates of non-violence in the communities. To that end, UNFPA ensured development of a special training programme, which helped high-level religious leaders to build their capacity as trainers of trainers and further sensitize middle- and grassroots-level religious leaders throughout Turkey on issues of gender and GBV. This approach supported public awareness raising on violence against women through Friday prayers, Quranic learning courses, community work and resulted in improved quality of counselling for women on family issues, including domestic violence.

Resources/Publications

- ❖ [Realizing the Faith Dividend: Religion, Gender, Peace and Security in Agenda 2030](#)
- ❖ [Religion, Women’s Health and Rights: Points of Contention and Paths of Opportunities](#)
- ❖ [Women, Faith and Human Rights](#)

- ❖ Engaging Religion and Faith-Based Actors – Overview 2016-2018 (UNFPA, available on www.UNFPA.org)
- ❖ [Culture Matters: Lessons from a Legacy of Engaging Faith-Based Organizations](#)
- ❖ [Guidelines for Engaging Faith-Based Organisations \(FBOs\) as Agents of Change](#)
- ❖ [Religion and Development Post-2015](#)



Source: UN Women

UNITED NATIONS OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY GENERAL'S SPECIAL ADVISER ON THE PREVENTION OF GENOCIDE AND THE RESPONSIBILITY TO PROTECT (OGPRTOP)

In 2018, the United Nations Office on Genocide Prevention and the Responsibility to Protect continued to engage with faith-based organizations (FBOs) as key partners in the prevention of atrocity crimes and their incitement, and in particular in the implementation of [the Plan of Action for Religious Leaders and Actors to Prevent Incitement to Violence that Could Lead to Atrocity Crimes](#) (“the Plan of Action”).

In this context, in February 2018, OGPRTOP discussed the implementation of the Plan of Action in a meeting that took place in Vienna, Austria. This meeting brought together potential implementation partners, including Member States, regional and international organizations, United Nations entities, secular and religious civil society, as well as media

actors. In total, 176 people attended the meeting, including 126 religious leaders and actors (from 46 countries) and representatives of 53 Member States. The meeting helped identify global and thematic priorities for the implementation of the Plan of Action, including translating into UN official languages (and other languages) and disseminating it; building Member States' political support; establishing a Global Steering Committee and Regional Coordination Committees; mapping existing initiatives aimed at implementing the Plan of Action; focusing on the education aspect of the Plan of Action, and involving women and youth. Following the meeting in Vienna, the Global Steering Committee for the Implementation of the Plan of Action and the Group of Friends of the Plan of Action were established. At the time of writing, the Regional Coordination Committee for Europe is also being established. In 2018, the Global Steering Committee met four times while the Groups of Friends in 2018.

In 2018, meetings on the implementation of the Plan of Action took place in Dhaka, Bangladesh, and Bangui, Central African Republic. In Dhaka, in collaboration with a youth organization, the Save and Serve Foundation, OGPRtoP brought together religious leaders and actors to discuss their contribution to a peaceful and inclusive Bangladesh. The meeting also focused on the role of religious leaders and actors to prevent violence and its incitement against the Rohingya refugees in Cox Bazar.

In Bangui, in partnership with KAICIID Dialogue Center and the CAR Interfaith Platform, OGPRtoP trained journalists and other relevant media experts in ethical reporting and the prevention of incitement to violence. The meeting resulted in the establishment of a network of journalist who committed to contribute to peace in CAR through their media activities.

OGPRtoP also signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the Forum for Promoting Peace in Muslim Societies. As per the MOU, OGPRtoP and the Forum will partner in 2019-2020 to organize 10 programmatic activities in Muslim majority countries and countries with large Muslim minorities on the implementation of the education Plan of Action.

In addition, OGPRtoP organized events on the implementation of the Plan of Action during the 2018 Counter Terrorism Week and the General Assembly. A seminal UNGA side event "Women of Faith as Agents of Peace" was held under the auspices of the UN Interagency Task Force on Religion, in collaboration with UNFPA, the European Union External Action Service/EU-EAAS, and the KAICIID Dialogue Center.

Resources/Publications

- ❖ [Upholding the Responsibility to Protect: The Role of Religious Leaders in Preventing Atrocity Crimes](#)
- ❖ [Bearing Witness: Combating Human Trafficking and Forced Migration](#)



Source: OHCHR

OFFICE OF THE UNITED NATIONS HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR HUMAN RIGHTS (OHCHR)

Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR)

The Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights has continued using the “Faith for Rights” framework in engaging with faith-based actors. This framework provides space for a cross-disciplinary reflection on the deep, and mutually enriching, connections between religions and human rights. The objective is to foster the development of peaceful societies, which uphold human dignity and equality for all and where diversity is not just tolerated but fully respected and celebrated (www.ohchr.org/EN/Issues/FreedomReligion/Pages/FaithForRights.aspx).

Highlights

The International Association for the Defence of Religious Liberty decided to grant its Initiative Award 2018 to OHCHR for the “Faith for Rights” programme. Furthermore, the Beirut Declaration and its 18 commitments on “Faith for Rights” have been translated by civil society organizations or UN entities from English into Albanian, Arabic, French, German, Greek, Russian, Serbian and Turkish. They have been referred to in a dozen thematic or country-specific reports by the UN Secretary-General and High Commissioner for Human Rights, e.g. concerning minorities’ rights, combating intolerance, preventing human rights abuses as well as youth and human rights. The UN Special Rapporteur on freedom of religion or belief has quoted the Beirut Declaration and its 18 commitments as soft law instruments in his reports to the General Assembly and Human Rights Council, stressing that they are

“important opportunities for advancing respect for freedom of religion and societal tolerance”. The civil society network Musawah also utilizes the Beirut Declaration and its 18 commitments for knowledge building, international advocacy and capacity building.

On 16 February 2018, OHCHR co-organized a seminar in Geneva on “Religion & Rights: Strengthening Common Ground”, together with Musawah and the UN Interagency Task Force on Religion and Development. The seminar introduced international initiatives that promote a human rights-based understanding of religion to build common ground between faith and rights. It also explored ways to enhance collaboration and more effective engagement with the international system to promote human rights for all. Furthermore, it highlighted good practices and possible approaches towards reform of discriminatory laws and practices in the name of religion to strengthen government compliance with international commitments and treaty obligations, notably with regard to women’s human rights.

On 2-5 May 2018, OHCHR organized a first regional workshop in Tunis on the role of youth faith actors in the promotion of human rights in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region. The workshop enhanced OHCHR’s engagement in the MENA region on combating incitement to religious hatred and violence, providing a space for faith-based civil society actors and especially young persons and women. Eleven youth-led initiatives from across the MENA region were presented, including three focusing on capacity building and human rights education for young religious actors, adolescents in schools and journalists.

On 24-30 June 2018, OHCHR provided workshops for Imams in Kiffa governorate, Mauritania. These workshops covered various human rights treaties (including the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights as well as the Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women) and the Beirut Declaration and its 18 commitments on “Faith for Rights”. The country office is working with Imams to open the dialogue on including human rights considerations in their preaching on Fridays.

On 5-8 November 2018, OHCHR organized a regional workshop in Marrakech, in partnership with Morocco’s national human rights institution. The workshop for 40 participants from 14 MENA countries was fully gender-balanced and also included three persons with disabilities. The experts, including the UN Special Rapporteur on minority issues, trained the participants on international human rights treaties and engaging with UN mechanisms; how to protect and promote the rights of religious minorities; and ways to combat hate speech, notably through the Rabat Plan of Action as well as Beirut Declaration and its 18 commitments. The workshop included many practical exercises, e.g. to summarize each of the 18 commitments on “Faith for Rights” into a tweet of less than 140 characters, which some participants spontaneously sent to their networks from their own Twitter accounts.

OHCHR participated in side events of the Human Rights Council, Forum on Minority Issues, European Parliament and UN Library Talks on “Rights – Faith – Fights”. OHCHR also organized an expert workshop on 13-14 December 2018, to strengthen the implementation of minority rights, freedom of religion or belief and

preventing violent extremism through designing human rights education and training materials for faith actors (#faith4rights toolkit).

Resources/Publications

- ❖ Report and outlook on “Faith for Rights”:
www.ohchr.org/Documents/Press/Faith4Rights.pdf
- ❖ One-page flyer on the “Faith for Rights” framework:
www.ohchr.org/Documents/Issues/Religion/FlyerF4R.pdf
- ❖ Summaries of the 18 commitments:
www.ohchr.org/EN/Issues/FreedomReligion/Pages/FaithForRights.aspx

JOINT UNITED NATIONS PROGRAMME ON HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS)

The Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS) leads and inspires the world to achieve its shared vision of zero new HIV infections, zero discrimination and zero AIDS-related deaths. UNAIDS unites the efforts of 11 UN organizations—UNHCR, UNICEF, WFP, UNDP, UNFPA, UNODC, UN Women, ILO, WHO, UNESCO and the World Bank.

Highlights

Key highlights of the religious leaders and FBOs involvement in the HIV response of 2018, co-convened and/or supported by UNAIDS:

Country level

FBO Action Plans in support of the implementation of the National AIDS Programmes in focus countries: five national FBO Action Plans were produced in support of the Fast Track. Zambia, Nigeria and Tanzania finalised their plans and some activities for their implementation are being organised. Zimbabwe and DRC are finalising theirs, to be launched in 2019. Other high impact countries to follow.

Manuals on “Faith Healing Only”: WCC-EHAIA finalized its manuals (English and French) on “Faith Healing Only”. The manuals were pilot-tested with inter-faith partners at different workshops in Zambia, Kenya and Rwanda (with participants from Burundi, DRC and Rwanda). These manuals emerged out of the realization that exclusive claims of faith healing only in the context of HIV and AIDS in sub-Saharan Africa are compromising adherence to antiretroviral therapy. They recognize that religious leaders are strategically placed to promote adherence to antiretroviral therapy (following through on the use of medication as suggested by a treating doctor) and to challenge stigma and discrimination. They consist of practical, user-friendly units, adaptable to different contexts, designed for use with faith communities, theological institutions and theological education by extension.

Early Diagnosis and Treatment for Children Living with HIV: Caritas Internationalis carried out a series of successful training workshops targeting religious leaders from different religions and congregations and health/social workers employed in FBO health facilities in Nigeria on the topic of Early Diagnosis and Treatment for Children Living with HIV, catalysing the national response. Caritas Internationalis has just launched similar trainings in the DRC. In both countries, an interfaith dimension has been maintained.

Training manuals on “Positive Masculinities and Femininities”: WCC-EHAIA organized two well-attended consultations in Nigeria and DRC on “*positive masculinities and femininities*”, in May and July respectively. The consultations brought together faith leaders and young people in each country.

Training-of-Trainers to Fight Stigma and Discrimination in Health Care Settings: ACHAP carried out in Nigeria a Training-of-Trainers workshop for faith leaders and health workers to fight stigma and discrimination in health care settings. Resulting from this, an outline for a national curriculum was developed that, when finalized, will become part of the already existing national Anti-discrimination Bill and the Stigma Reduction Strategy.

Islamic Relief: review of the past HIV activities of the Islamic Relief (IR). Lessons learned and replicable models from the mapping (review) will be used in other countries. IR identified a country (South Africa) where they could re-introduce HIV activities into their work on gender-based violence and advocacy in conflict situations. Further activities planned for 2019.

Global level

Interfaith Pre-Conference at the International AIDS Conference 2018 in Amsterdam: WCC-EAA held a successful interfaith pre-conference at the recent International AIDS Conference in July 2018, under the theme “*Faith Building Bridges*”. A range of faith-based activities were organized. In addition, ACHAP, Emory University, Caritas Internationalis and WCC-EHAIA had strong visibility in many other sessions and events of IAC 2018, including a weeklong series of events held in the Global Village accessible to the broader public.

Interfaith Prayer Breakfast: The previous years’ commitment of countries and partners to the HIV response through an Interfaith Prayer Breakfast was also maintained in 2018, on 27 September 2018, in New York, under the theme: “*Building Partnerships to End AIDS and TB in children and adolescents by 2030*”. The participants included governments, faith leaders, community representatives and health service providers from different religious traditions. Following the UN High Level Meeting on Tuberculosis held the previous day, survivors of multidrug-resistant TB, brought a powerful sense of urgency and reality to the discussion. Participants committed to increase support in order to end AIDS and TB as public health threats by 2030. This event was a first concrete step on the way to implement the Political Declaration adopted by the UN General Assembly at the conclusion of the High-Level Meeting on TB.

Resources/Publications

- ❖ *Academic Consortium web platform of health FBO service delivery in Kenya:*
<http://ihpemory.org/kenya-overview/>

- ❖ Lead by Example Religious Leaders HIV Testing campaign webpage
<http://www.oikoumene.org/en/what-we-do/religious-leaders-and-hiv-testing>
- ❖ Nairobi, Kenya Framework for Dialogue Impact Assessment 7th-8th February 2017:
<http://www.oikoumene.org/en/press-centre/news/gathering-in-kenya-explores-eliminating-hiv-stigma-through-love-and-dialogue>
- ❖ Abuja, Nigeria Consultation June 2017:
http://www.unaids.org/en/resources/presscentre/featurestories/2017/june/20170619_nigeria
- ❖ Nairobi, Kenya 'Day of the African Child' event 16th June 2017:
<http://www.oikoumene.org/en/press-centre/news/day-of-the-african-child-an-opportunity-to-raise-awareness-on-pediatric-aids>
<http://www.oikoumene.org/en/press-centre/news/2019s-time-to-take-action201d-2013-201dlet2019s-make-this-virus-powerless201d>
- ❖ Kampala, Uganda Faith Healing Consultation 4th-8th September 2017:
<https://www.oikoumene.org/en/press-centre/news/2019facing-the-storm-of-hiv-we-can-move-together-be-agents-of-change201d>
<https://www.oikoumene.org/en/press-centre/news/four-voices-one-concern-2013-addressing-2019faith-healing-only201d-in-context-of-hiv>
- ❖ New York, USA Interfaith Prayer Service 12th September 2017:
<http://www.oikoumene.org/en/press-centre/news/it-will-take-faith-to-get-down-to-business-to-overcome-hiv-and-aids>
- ❖ New York, USA Prayer Breakfast 13th September 2017:
http://www.unaids.org/en/resources/presscentre/featurestories/2017/september/20170914_faith_fasttrack
<https://www.oikoumene.org/en/press-centre/news/faith-on-the-fast-track-for-children-living-with-hiv>
- ❖ Kigali, Rwanda consultation on HIV Treatment Adherence and Faith Healing 25th-28th September 2017:
<https://www.oikoumene.org/en/press-centre/news/building-momentum-as-wcc-ehaia-addresses-faith-healing-only-practices-in-francophone-africa>



Source: UNAOC

UNITED NATIONS ALLIANCE OF CIVILIZATIONS (UNAOC)

The Alliance of Civilizations continues its work towards building a broad consensus across nations, cultures and religions for stability, prosperity and peaceful co-existence. This effort reflects the will of the vast majority of peoples to reject extremism and support respect for religious diversity.

Highlights

The Alliance continues to collaborate with Georgetown’s Berkley Center for Religion, Peace and Global Affairs around [education about religions and beliefs](#) community. This includes a network of academic and NGO [partners](#) as well as [organizations](#) active in the field of education about religions and beliefs, intercultural education, and interfaith harmony.

The Education about Religions and Beliefs program consists of three components.

- A [web-based portal](#) for resources on education about religions and beliefs including civic education, ethics education, and tolerance education;
- A platform for partners to present research and findings from theory and practice;
- A network to promote the positive role of religion and interfaith harmony.

In April, the UN Alliance of Civilizations, with the Permanent Mission of Kazakhstan, co-organised an Arria-Formula Meeting on the theme “Religious Leaders for a Safe World”. The meeting was an occasion for the United Nations community and other relevant stakeholders, including representatives of faith-based organizations, to stress the

significance of fostering respectful tolerance across diverse cultures and religions, to address violent extremism and terrorism, and to reiterate the principles of relevant UN resolutions.

In November, the UN Alliance of Civilizations hosted its 8th Global Forum addressing the theme of “Commit2Dialogue: Partnerships for Prevention and Sustaining Peace”, hosted in New York. The theme reflected concerns with the worldwide rise of violent extremism, xenophobia, and discrimination. Given the intolerance and fear of the other which continue to prevail in many societies, the Forum was designed to re-commit to interreligious and intercultural dialogue and to the promotion of tolerance, diversity and a culture of peace. The Forum provided an open space for UNAOC Group of Friends, UN system entities, civil society including NGOs, faith-based organizations, media and private sector to share good practices on ways to promote dialogue and understanding with partnerships that work.

The Forum hosted a Plenary Session “Interreligious and Intercultural Dialogue: A Tool for Conflict Prevention and Post-Conflict Peacebuilding”, wherein political actors spoke to the promotion of interreligious and intercultural dialogue as a tool to diffuse tensions and facilitate understanding among people and identity groups based on religion, culture, and ethnicity. Points of discussion included addressing challenges and opportunities around interreligious and intercultural dialogue, as well as potential and actual collaboration between policy makers and faith-based NGOs, youth, academia, and media.

Another session entitled “Many Cultures, One Humanity: The Role and Responsibility of Religious Leaders and FBOs in Building Peaceful and Inclusive Societies”, convened diverse religious leaders and FBOs, already vested in all processes of human development. Religious leaders spoke of their respective advocacy and engagements to mobilize support for peace at all levels of society, including in conflict and post-conflict settings oftentimes as key catalysts of nonviolent transformation, reconciliation and stability. The session thus provided an opportunity to exchange views and good practices in engaging with religious leaders and faith-based organizations involved in peacebuilding, national reconciliation, and prevention of violent extremism.

Also at the Global Forum, the new High Representative of the UN Alliance of Civilizations, H.E. Mr. Miguel Ángel Moratinos, spoke of his commitment to deepening engagement with religious and cultural leaders and organisations, in support of the UN’s peace and security and sustainable development agendas.

Resources/Publications

- ❖ <https://www.unaoc.org/2017/12/remarks-responsibility-of-religions-and-governments-for-peace/>
- ❖ <https://www.unaoc.org/2017/07/religious-leaders-discuss-concrete-measures-for-peacebuilding-in-the-middle-east-at-unaoc-event/>
- ❖ <https://www.unaoc.org/2017/07/opening-remarks-the-role-of-religious-leaders-in-peacebuilding-in-the-middle-east/>
- ❖ <https://www.unaoc.org/2017/02/al-nasser-remarks-at-the-interfaith-harmony-week-event-embracing-the-other/>

UNITED NATIONS DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME (UNDP)

UNDP's strategic framework for the prevention of violent extremism reflects a growing appreciation for the unique role that religion, faith, and religious communities and leaders can play in global development efforts. Across the 130 or so countries in which UNDP works, it promotes interreligious and intercultural dialogue in order to enhance mutual respect and to create an environment conducive to peace and mutual understanding.

UNDP's released a report in 2017, entitled *[The Journey to Extremism in Africa: Drivers, Incentives and Tipping Points for Recruitment](#)*, which presents the results of a two-year study on recruitment among some extremist groups in Africa. It reveals that religion is exploited by extremist groups to justify the resort to violence, becoming a focal point for a number of other grievances. In the study, 51% of respondents identified religion as a reason for joining extremist groups. But a majority respondents also admitted to limited or no understanding of religious texts. Indeed, higher than average years of religious schooling appears to have been a source of resilience. These findings demonstrate that fostering greater understanding of religion, through methods that enable people, particularly youth, to question and engage critically with teachings, is a key resource for Preventing Violent Extremism efforts. Furthermore, the study warns that the feeling of 'religion is under threat' was found to be a common perspective among many respondents. In turn, the study cautions that recruitment by violent extremist groups, using religion as a touchstone for other context-based grievances, has the potential to increase.

At the global level, UNDP supports the Plan of Action for Religious Leaders and Actors to Prevent Incitement to Violence that Could Lead to Atrocity Crimes (the "Plan of Action") and shared its experience in working with Religious Leaders and Actors during a Ministerial Side-Event organized in support of the "Plan of Action". UNDP is also a founding member of the International Partnership on Religion and Sustainable Development (PaRD) and have been contributing to its development along with other UN sister agencies.

In June 2017, UNDP, Rainforest Foundation Norway and Norway's International Climate and Forest Initiative, brought together Indigenous and religious leaders from 21 countries to hold a three-day event in Oslo/Norway that generated dialogue between NGOs, government agencies, universities, indigenous groups and with conservationists and scientists, to develop the ethical case for protecting tropical forests. The event marks the launch of *the Interfaith Rainforest Initiative*, which seeks to build on the moral case for rainforest protection with tangible metrics and goals.

In November, 2016, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the King Abdullah International Dialogue Centre (KAICIID) jointly organized a meeting with more than 100 participants from 25 countries convened in Amman. The meeting, entitled "*Interreligious Dialogue on Diversity, Tolerance and Social Cohesion in the Arab Region*", addressed the instrumental role of religious leaders and religious institutions in enhancing diversity, tolerance and social cohesion to counter the roots of extremism.

UNDP has been working closely with the Network for Religious and Traditional Peacemakers. In May 2017 they jointly organized a two-day workshop in partnership with Union Theological Seminary and the Gerald and Henrietta Rauenhorst (GHR) Foundation. During the, participants review past reconciliation processes and examine the need for

research and collaborative action to explore the potential of religion in enabling reconciliation and the healing of community relationships. They also examine the relationship between political processes and grass root reconciliation efforts to see if UN processes and other state actors could safeguard their impact and further their results.

From UNDP Country Offices

In the **Philippines**, supported by the UNDP-DPA Joint Programme for Building National Capacities for Conflict Prevention, a critical lobbying effort with the Philippines Congress to grant special autonomy to the Muslim-majority Moro people—as per the peace agreement signed between the Government and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front in 2014—is being led by the Catholic Archbishop of Cotabato, the Mindanao town which has been the epicenter of the Moro insurgency. Cardinal Quevedo heads a UNDP-supported high-level group of senior intermediaries from both Manila and the Mindanao region who call themselves the Friends of Peace, and who are championing the implementation of the peace agreement, and also raising national awareness of the plight of the Moro. Interfaith dialogue between Christian and Muslim religious leaders has been a key component of their work.

A critical frontline in the prevention of violent extremism in Mindanao has been the Moro youth themselves. The *Al Qalam* Institute for Islamic Identities and Dialogue in South East Asia, based at the Philippines' top Catholic Ateneo de Davao University, has established the “Salaam” network with UNDP support, wherein young scholars are using both religious discourse as well as more secular social media to reach out to individuals and communities at the risk of radicalization, and to provide them with spaces for venting their grievances and establishing more positive narratives of peaceful struggle for social justice.

Under the Insider Mediator project UNDP currently supports the traditional leaders in the Ixil Triangle (municipalities of Nebaj, Cotzala and Chajul, with about 80% of population being Maya). In addition to land and natural resource conflicts, the region was the scene of numerous human rights violations during the armed conflict in Guatemala. According to the human rights organizations hundreds of people were killed in this region. In this particular region of country, traditional leaders and spiritual guides are socially recognized individuals with a vocation for community work that are best positioned to mediate conflicts and lead reconciliation processes in their communities. On a regular basis they mediate land disputes, business disagreements, and inter-generational or family conflicts. Also traditional leaders, specifically indigenous recognized authorities are called to lead the participation of indigenous peoples in prior consultations and dialogue processes as they relate to measures that could affect their rights and territories.

On the 11th of January 2017, UNDP **Ethiopia** organized a national conference “Enhancing role of religious leaders as messengers of peace and reconciliation” with Religious leaders from across the country on peace and reconciliation with detailed recommendations to be presented to the Ethiopian government to help address issues around recent unrest and public protests. The religious leaders, joined by representatives from the youth, women, private sector and civil society, were brought together by Ethiopia's Inter-Religious Council.

On January 27th, 2017, UNDP **South Sudan** trained a number of civil society actors to work on “*Truth, Justice, Reconciliation and Healing*”. UNDP organised a Training of

Trainers for the [Transitional Justice Working Group](#) together with other civil society actors and representatives of the South Sudan Human Rights Commission who are involved in different aspects of transitional justice in South Sudan, such as truth-telling and community outreach. The training aimed at equipping participants with the relevant skills to train other civil society actors as well as other actors engaging on transitional justice in South Sudan. The training intended to enhance participants' knowledge and provide them with the analytical framework and pedagogical tools that they can use to transfer their knowledge and training skills.

UNDP is enhancing church leaders' leading roles in reconciliation and peacebuilding processes in support to the implementation of the 2008 Global Peace Agreement in *Zimbabwe*. UNDP has also supported the establishment of 285 *Local Peace Committees*, comprised of key community leaders, women and youth, together with political actors who have been trained on mediation and conflict resolution to address conflict in their communities.

Resources/Publications

- ❖ [Faith in Finance: Faith-Consistent Investing and the Sustainable Development Goals](#)
- ❖ [UNDP Guidelines on Engaging with Faith-based Organizations and Religious Leaders](#)
- ❖ [KAICIID, United Nations Development Programme \(UNDP\) Cooperation to Promote Social Cohesion in Arab Region](#)
- ❖ [UNDP and Islamic Development Bank Sign Partnership to Support the Sustainable Development Goals](#)

UNITED NATIONS DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC INFORMATION (DPI)

The Department of Public Information, through the NGO Relations Unit, engages with FBOs on a regular basis. More than 60% of all active NGOs, of the more than 1,450 NGOs formally associated with the Department, are faith based organizations. This means that the potential for outreach and engagement within faith communities, at all levels, is carefully evaluated when planning for activities and programmes. During 2017, eight new faith-based NGOs became associated with the Department representing global faith traditions and religions.

One of the main platforms where DPI engages FBOs is the ***Focus on Faith*** (FoF) Series, of the thematic Thursday Briefings organized by NGO Relations. In 2017 the unit broke record numbers of participation for a Thursday Briefing with the session called “The Role of Faith-Based Organizations in Refugee Assistance and Refugee Resettlement Work”, with over 526 people in attendance, representing civil society organizations, academic institutions, media outlets and Member States. The briefing took place on 13 April at UNHQ in New York, and explored the work and impact that the coordinated efforts of FBOs have in the lives of millions of refugees, particularly in regard to the resettlement processes and efforts, facilitating the integration of those being assisted into their new communities, and encouraging the creation of sustainable communities built on the principles of respect, safety and dignity for all.

Looking Forward

The 2018, the Focus on Faith Briefing will explore “*Challenges to Freedom of Religion or Belief*” across the globe, with a special focus on the role of youth in the creation of safe and diverse communities.

Resources/Publications

- ❖ <http://webtv.un.org/watch/finding-a-new-home-the-role-of-faith-based-organizations-in-refugee-assistance-and-refugee-resettlement-work/5397570252001>
- ❖ <http://webtv.un.org/search?term=Focus+on+Faith&sort=date>



Source: UNESCO

UNITED NATIONS EDUCATIONAL, SCIENTIFIC AND CULTURAL ORGANIZATION (UNESCO)

Highlights

UNESCO works to create the conditions for dialogue among civilizations, cultures and peoples, based upon respect for commonly shared values. It is through this dialogue that the world can achieve global visions of sustainable development encompassing observance of human rights, mutual respect and the alleviation of poverty, all of which are at the heart of UNESCO’s activities. UNESCO’s mission is to contribute to the building of peace, the eradication of poverty, sustainable development and intercultural dialogue through education, the sciences, culture, communication and information.

The work of the organization in its different fields of competences has contributed to the promotion of interreligious dialogue, a key component of intercultural dialogue. UNESCO is convinced that, as with ignorance generally, ignorance of religion leads to misunderstanding and thus to intolerance of what is not understood. Similarly, a unidimensional culture and education, upholding only one religious “truth” to the detriment of the pluralism of ideas and beliefs, can lead to all kinds of isolationism and nationalistic or ideological excess. In such cases, religion may be used for political ends to break social cohesion, or it may even hide the deep-seated causes of political, economic or social unease.

UNESCO, in close collaboration with the Secretariat and a broad range of UN entities, prepared the report “Promotion of a culture of peace and interreligious and intercultural dialogue, understanding and cooperation for peace”, reflecting the shared responsibility involved in promoting a culture of peace and intercultural and interreligious dialogue. As well as pursuing and refining ongoing initiatives, the participating entities have explored innovative ways to work more effectively together and in partnership with national governments and other stakeholders.

Building on the standard setting role of UNESCO, relevant instruments established in the field of culture speak to the importance of religion and value its respect as a basis for building more peaceful and inclusive societies.

For example, the World Heritage Convention (1972) offers an enabling environment for the inscription to a great variety of religious and sacred sites that are representative of the different cultures and traditions of the world. As such, understanding the continuing nature of religious and sacred heritage, having the capacity to protect its authenticity and integrity, including its particular spiritual significance, and sharing the knowledge of our common history, are the three pillars necessary for building mutual respect and dialogue between communities. Today, approximately 20 percent of the properties inscribed on the World Heritage List have some sort of religious or spiritual connection. The 2010 Seminar on the Role of Religious Communities in the Management of World Heritage Properties was a positive step forward, with the adoption of a “Statement on the Protection of Religious Properties within the Framework of the World Heritage Convention”. This was a key endeavor in the context of the International Year for the Rapprochement of Cultures (2010). This Convention is also at the heart of UNESCO’s efforts to face emerging acts of terrorism and deliberate destruction of heritage sites with religious and sacred value, as demonstrated during recent conflicts such as in Mali, Iraq or Syria, just to name a few.

Nevertheless, culture can be very effectively harnessed to unite different groups. The global outcry over the destruction of World Heritage sites in the Syrian Arab Republic, Iraq, Yemen and elsewhere in recent times bears witness to the unique status that cultural and natural heritage have in being both specific to a culture, reflecting the life of a community, its history and identity, and also belonging to all of humanity.

Protecting and restoring cultural heritage rekindles hope and offers fragile, conflict-and poverty-ravaged communities a constructive alternative to the violent extremist’s nihilistic agenda. In Mali, which has endured repeated violence since 2012, UNESCO has enhanced the national peace and reconciliation process that followed the signature of a peace agreement in 2015 by helping to rebuild 14 historic mausoleums in the World Heritage city of Timbuktu. The centuries-old mausoleums, sacred places for the local population, were

destroyed by radical Islamists in deliberate acts that the Director General of UNESCO, Irina Bokova, has described as “cultural cleansing”. The city formally received the keys to the mausoleums, which were rebuilt by local stonemasons, at the Djingareyber Mosque in February 2016, in a traditional consecration ceremony that last took place at the site in the eleventh century. The strong involvement of local communities and religious leaders in the reconstruction project demonstrates the power of culture to unite and restore the confidence of a fragmented community.

International cooperation to salvage the archaeological heritage of the Syrian Arab Republic is also in place. A rapid assessment mission was sent to the country in April 2016, an initiative that was followed by an international conference, held in Berlin in June 2016, in partnership with the Government of Germany. Some 230 international and Syrian experts discussed priority measures and how and when work on the ground should begin.

The Unite for Heritage online media campaign continues to keep the activities in the public eye. Other actions to put culture and heritage at the center of peacebuilding and humanitarian emergency operations, most notably the signature of a recent agreement between UNESCO and the International Committee of the Red Cross to integrate culture into humanitarian operations, pave the way for further opportunities to cooperate and build peace through culture.

The promotion of intercultural dialogue for sustainable development was also enhanced by UNESCO and the Government of the Islamic Republic of Iran, with the joint organization of a seminar on environment, religion and culture, promoting intercultural dialogue for sustainable development, held in April 2016, 15 years after a seminar on the same theme was held in Tehran, in 2001. At the event, representatives and specialists of different cultures and religions discussed how culture and religion contributed to sustainable development and they explored the nexus between the three concepts. A document was published urging religious leaders and FBOs to actively promote a culture of peace in their work to implement the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. It called upon Member States to put culture at the heart of their efforts to find durable solutions for environmental challenges in a spirit of dialogue, understanding and respect for diversity.

In keeping with the need to “Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts” as called for in Goal 13 of the SDGs, UNESCO is also fostering international dialogue to explore the ethical implications of global climate change for biological diversity, cultural diversity, global justice, international solidarity, resilience and durability through the work of its World Commission on the Ethics of Scientific Knowledge and Technology, since 2005. Based on the extensive work that has been completed so far, during the thirty-eighth session of the General Conference, Member States requested UNESCO to prepare a preliminary text for a non-binding declaration on ethical principles in relation to climate change for the next General Conference, to be held in 2017. Such action is meant to complement the important work being carried out on climate change through the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change. UNESCO will launch a broad and inclusive dialogue between Member States, experts and stakeholders to this end.

Resources/Publications

- ❖ [International decade for the Rapprochement of Cultures \(2013-2022\)](#)

- ❖ Report of the Secretary General on [Promotion of a culture of peace and interreligious and intercultural dialogue, understanding and cooperation for peace \(A/71/407\)](#)
- ❖ [Agree to Differ](#) (UNESCO, 2015)

UN ENVIRONMENT PROGRAMME (UNEP)



Source: UNEP

The United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) is the leading global environmental authority that sets the global environmental agenda, promotes the coherent implementation of the environmental dimension of sustainable development within the United Nations system and serves as an authoritative advocate for the global environment. UNEP's mission is "To provide leadership and encourage partnership in caring for the environment by inspiring, informing, and enabling nations and peoples to improve their quality of life without compromising that of future generations." For UN Environment, cooperation with Faith-based Organizations dates back to 1986, when the Interfaith Partnership for the Environment (IPE) was created to initially inform North American congregations about the serious environmental problems facing life on Earth.

In January 2018, the UN Environment Strategy on Engaging with Faith-Based Organizations (Faith for Earth Initiative) was launched. The strategy has three overarching goals: 1) Empowering Leadership for policy impact; 2) Financing to support SDGs; and 3) Providing knowledge-based decision support system. The three goals will largely depend on mobilizing local communities; coordinating communications and advocacy; fostering south-south cooperation; and engaging on faith-Environment thematic conversations. The strategy was vetted by a global meeting that was organized during the UN Environment Assembly with 40 representatives of organizations representing 10 faiths.

The Faith initiative along with UNEP-FI working with several partners on engaging with faith-based organizations such as the Responsible Finance and Investment Foundation (RFI), Islamic Development Bank, World Council of Churches, the Church of England and many others, held a roundtable and summit on responsible financing with a focus on Islamic Financing during the period 25-27 April in Zurich. The roundtable discussed faith-consistent investment criteria that integrate environmental stewardship and care for the creation.

UN Environment has also launched the Interfaith Rainforest Alliance as an initiative designed to bring moral attention and spiritual commitment to ending tropical deforestation. It is an international, multi-faith partnership that will rally spiritual and religious communities to act for the protection of rainforests and the rights of the indigenous peoples who safeguard them. The alliance will be a shared platform for the world's religions to unite in their efforts to end deforestation and to work within their respective faith to make rainforest protection a moral and ethical priority. The initiative is being led by United Nations Environment, Norway's International Climate and Forest Initiative (NICFI) and Rainforest Foundation Norway.

Faith for Earth has been working on developing guidelines and publications linking environmental priorities to faith. Drafts on faith and each of the following have been prepared: climate change, conflict over natural resources, water governance, sustainable lifestyles, and finance.

The Initiative has supported faith-based organizations across the world in organizing activities to celebrate the World Environment Day and conduct Cleanup campaigns in slum areas, most notably in Nairobi-Kenya. The initiative has inspired the creation of an environment ministry for the Nairobi Church (<https://www.unenvironment.org/news-and-stories/blogpost/faith-earth-initiative-inspires-formation-edens-stewards-ministry>) Video link: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=S2pT9g0OO_U&feature=youtu.be

The Initiative has published a knowledge product in UN Environment Foresight linking Environmental conservation to Faith and cultural values. Link http://wedocs.unep.org/bitstream/handle/20.500.11822/25452/Foresight_008_201805.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y

The Faith for Earth Initiative has created a network with 400+ Faith-Based Organizations and is sharing knowledge and resources for interfaith collaboration. An advocacy campaign has been launched with a unique hashtag [#Faith4Earth](#)

The Faith For Earth Initiative has contributed to the international conference on the theme, 'Saving our Common Home and the Future of Life on Earth,' that was organized by the Vatican Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development, which took place from 5-6 July 2018 in Vatican City. The initiative built on cooperation with other divisions and units contributed to the discussions on Climate Change, Green Economy, Faith leaders' empowerment and the role of youth. A briefing to His Holiness Pope Francis on UN Environment engagement with faith organizations was made by the Executive Director at the Vatican in October 2018.

The Initiative organized consultation meetings with many FBOs including; the World Council of Churches, the Alliance on Religion and Conservation, GreenFaith, The Parliament of World's Religions.

A website for the initiative has been launched in September highlighting resources and stories. <https://www.unenvironment.org/about-un-environment/faith-earth-initiative>. An Intranet website has also been developed to inform, empower and engage UN Environment staff on linkages between the programme of work and Faith For Earth Initiative.

The Initiative contributed to the global Conference on Faith in Finance held in Zurich 17-18 September 2018. Linkages between private sector companies, faith-based organizations and entrepreneurs were made to contribute to financing sustainable development.

To ensure adequate integration of engaging with faith-based organizations as a strategy to widen the spectrum of stakeholders and major groups in the programme of work, a global survey of linkages between the programme of work and engaging with faith-based organization was launched in September to map areas of strategic intervention and the SDGs.

Opportunities of investing in innovation and innovative approaches for the implementation of the SDGs by faith-based organizations was discussed at the Arabia CSR Forum held in Dubai 2-3 October 2018.

Several memoranda of understanding have been signed between regional offices of UN Environment and FBOs. In addition, accredited FBOs to the UN Environment Assembly has increased from 10 organizations to 27 by the end of 2018.

The Faith for Earth Initiative engaged with the chairs of the Regional groups of UN Environment Committee of Permanent Representatives where the initiative was discussed and feedback solicited and reference was made in the programme of work of 2020-2021 giving the initiative an official mandate.



Source: UNEP

OFFICE OF THE UNITED NATIONS HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR REFUGEES (UNHCR)

Highlights

UNHCR participated in the Adventist Development and Relief Agency's (ADRA's) Annual Council in March 2017 in the context of ADRA's commitment to developing a global refugee advocacy policy. This presented a significant opportunity to help mobilize public opinion in favor of refugees, particularly the messaging around inclusion, through the large number of people who belong to this faith-based network.

UNHCR mobilized all its partners including faith-based organizations in the roll-out of the Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework, CRRF ("The New York Declaration on Refugees and Migrants"). The Annual Consultations with NGOs on the CRRF, which was very well-attended, featured an event on "Promoting a positive narrative about refugees" with social media and faith-based organizations including Facebook, Orient-Occident Foundation Morocco, the Amadeo Antonio Foundation Germany, Islamic Relief Worldwide, and the World Council of Churches.

The Lutheran World Federation (LWF), another of UNHCR's faith-based partners, has been especially active in the roll-out the CRRF in Eastern Africa. All of its country programs are in one way or another working with religious leaders, such as the Uganda country program collaboration with Church of Uganda on the 16 days of activism against gender based violence or the Kenyan country program's work with members of the national ACT alliance forum most of whom are religious institutions/leaders. A particularly innovative approach of LWF is to work in complementarity with the Universal Periodic

Review mechanism of the Human Rights Council thereby effectively mainstreaming refugee policy into human rights policies at the national level.

Moreover, UNHCR participated in the launch of the International Faith-Consistent Investment movement in Zug, Switzerland on 30 October.

As a follow up from the World Humanitarian Summit in 2016, UNHCR participated in an international Forum on Localizing Response to Humanitarian Need, responding to and reinforcing the localization of aid/Grand Bargain discussions. The Forum was designed to produce a body of evidence on questions of how to engage local faith actors, and actions to scale up their engagement as local partners. 142 people from 36 countries assembled to learn from Sri Lankan religious leaders and FBOs and from each other about local faith engagement in humanitarian response, and to discuss how to scale up engagement. The Forum was organized by a consortium of faith-based organizations, and co-coordinated by the Joint Learning Initiative on Faith and Local Communities ([JLI-LFC](#))

UNHCR provided technical support to IRW and LWF on the Draft guidelines for Faith-sensitive mental-health and psycho-social support (MHPSS) Programming, which were completed in 2017 based on a desk review and fieldwork in Kenya, Jordan and Nepal. The will undergo peer review and pilot testing in 2018.

One of the most noteworthy outcomes of the many engagements was enhanced networking opportunities with other civil society organizations with a wide base of support and activities in areas closely related to UNHCR's work. Thus for instance, through the ADRA council, UNHCR encountered the organisation "[Purpose](#)", which has been building an ambitious new initiative focused on changing hearts and minds in Europe, and globally, around the refugee crisis. Purpose works through research collating and assessing opinions, message development, popular movement-building and campaigning to reach mainstream audiences to counter the rising tide of xenophobia and anti-immigrant populism.

Looking forward

In 2018, UNHCR and the Lutheran World Federation (LWF) plan to do a follow-up on the dialogue with faith leaders in 2012 "Welcoming the stranger". For more information, please contact Ms. Tamar Joanian (JOANIAN@unhcr.org).

UNHCR will continue to participate in the Strategic Learning Exchange on Religion, Development and Humanitarian Work, whose next edition is planned to take early 2018 (postponed from January due to developments in the region).

Resources/Publications

- ❖ [Analysis of the Survey on Good Practice Examples: Faith-based Organisations and Local Faith Communities Contributing to Protection Outcomes](#) (UNHCR, 2013)
- ❖ [Welcoming the Stranger: Affirmations for Faith Leaders](#) (UNHCR, 2013)
- ❖ [Partnership Note: On Faith-Based Organizations, Local Faith Communities and Faith Leaders](#) (UNHCR, 2014)
- ❖ [Policy Brief: Local Faith Groups and Humanitarian Assistance](#) (JLI, 2015)
- ❖ [Policy Brief: Gender, Religion and Humanitarian Responses to Refugees](#) (University College London, 2016)
- ❖ The [#WithRefugees petition](#) (UNHCR)

UNITED NATIONS CHILDREN’S FUND (UNICEF)

Highlights

UNICEF is the leading humanitarian and development UN agency working globally for the rights of every child. Child rights begin with safe shelter, nutrition, protection from disaster and conflict and traverse the life cycle: pre-natal care for healthy births, clean water and sanitation, health care and education. UNICEF has spent nearly 70 years working to improve the lives of children and their families, and also lobbies and partners with leaders, thinkers and policy makers to help all children realize their rights—especially the most disadvantaged.

The Convention on the Rights of the Child reflects deeply-held values embedded within religious traditions that uphold the inherent dignity of every child and the centrality of the family in building strong communities. Religious communities are uniquely positioned to promote equitable outcomes for the most vulnerable children and families. Their moral influence and extensive networks give them access to the most disenfranchised and deprived groups, those that international organizations and governments are sometimes less able to reach effectively. They are also grounded in philosophical frameworks that shape their call to community service into long-term commitments to achieving peace, justice and social equality.

In 2018, UNICEF continued its work with FBOs and religious leaders at global, regional and national levels across all areas of the UNICEF Strategic Plan. A particularly noteworthy new global endeavor has been the The Global Faith for Social and Behaviour Change (F4SBC) Initiative.

In 2018 UNICEF embarked on a new global partnership initiative on Faith for Social and Behaviour change in collaboration with Religions for Peace (RfP), a multi-religious coalition and the Joint Learning Initiative on Faith and Local Communities (JLI), an international multi-sector network for evidence on faith actors’ development activities. The purpose of the global Faith for SBCC initiative is to support more focused, evidence-based, systematic and at-scale engagement with faith-based communities and actors to influence positive social and behaviour change towards improving the wellbeing of children, youth, women and families, particularly the most marginalized.

The main strategies outlined for the initiative include:

- Strengthening the global evidence base on Faith for SBCC;
- Establishing a co-created theory of change and programming framework for FBO engagement, particularly in the context of UNICEF country programmes;
- Developing and consolidating existing technical guidance and tools for engagement of Faith actors on SBCC initiatives;
- Supporting more systematic capacity development of faith actors and related partners around Faith for SBCC initiatives;
- Promote the exchange of good practices and lessons learned and the strengthening of partnerships to support on-going social and behaviour change led by Faith actors.

Key outputs from the initiative F4SBC in 2018, include:

- A Global Literature Review and Stocktaking exercise in selected countries across regions on Faith actors-led initiatives to support social and behaviour change;
- The development of Case Studies on FBO Partnerships for social and behaviour change for the 17 UNICEF country offices that participated in the F4SBC workshop;
- The identification and assessment of tools currently being used in SBC work with FBOs both by UNICEF and by other partners.
- A key milestone for the F4SBC initiative in 2018 was the convening of a global workshop in Bangkok Thailand, with over 100 participants from 22 countries including UNICEF staff, faith actors from multiple congregational groups and national government representatives.

UNITED NATIONS ENTITY FOR GENDER EQUALITY AND THE EMPOWERMENT OF WOMEN (UN WOMEN)



Source: UN Women

Highlights

Work with the UN Interagency Task Force on Religion

As part of the recently created IATF Faith Advisory Board, UN Women participated in different advocacy spaces at the UN and provided critical guidance on gender equality issues, multilateralism and the role of faith actors in upholding the human rights mandate of the UN.

On September 21st, it participated in the first meeting of the Faith Advisory Board composed of Faith-based organizations and actors who partner with UN Agencies in advancing sustainable development goals. It also took part in the Kofi Annan briefings on religion, peace and development in which UN representatives, diplomats and various faith organizations and faith actors were gathered to discuss the role of faith in peacebuilding, multilateralism and how FBOs can best support the work of the UN².

On November 29th-30th, it hosted the IATF Strategic Learning Exchange on Religion, Development and Diplomacy in which members of the IATF Faith Advisory Board, diplomats, faith-based organizations, academia and other stakeholders came together to discuss the future of faith-oriented partnerships with state, non-state and secular development actors.

Participation at CSW62: March 15, 2018

CSW 62, with its priority theme of “Challenges and opportunities in achieving gender equality and the empowerment of rural women and girls” offered a critical opportunity to discuss what the pledge of Leaving No One Behind, in the SDG achievement meant in terms of ensuring that every rural woman and girl everywhere, is aware of and enjoys all her rights and entitlements and lives a life of equality, opportunity and access.

UN Women’s Civil Society Division, in collaboration with key partners, convened a dialogue with civil society, including FBOs, with a focus on rural women leaders and activists along with other stakeholders, to discuss, *Leaving No One Behind for Planet 50/50 by 2030: every rural woman and girl everywhere*. The side event was an interactive discussion with civil society and key partners to discuss policy standards necessary in *Leaving No One Behind*, and what this meant for rural women and girls, with all the intersectional complexities of widowhood, marital status disability, sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, sex characteristics, indigenous and ethnic identities, age, refugee or migrant status.

Strengthened collaboration with faith actors, feminists and social justice movements

One of UN Women’s aims is to ensure a strengthened coalition of faith actors, feminists and social justice movements (religious leaders, faith communities, faith advocates, young faith advocates, academia) that systematically engage in global advocacy efforts at global, regional and country level. During 2018, it created opportunities for meaningful engagement with faith actors, feminists and social justice movements and youth in global advocacy efforts at regional and country level.

ACT Alliance General Assembly, October 26-27th:

UN Women and ACT Alliance have an institutional partnership working together with faith leaders, actors and communities in a joint goal of ensuring that gender justice is achieved globally. UN Women supports ACT Alliance working with faith-based actors in communities around the world, to transform the laws, values and behaviors that perpetuate

² The Report of the Annual Kofi Annan UNGA Faith Briefings, is Annex V of this Report.

gender inequalities, and to amplify actions and initiatives to achieve gender equality. As part of this partnership, UN Women's Executive Director Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka opened the ACT Alliance General Assembly in October 2018, and UN Women also lent support to the launch and implementation of the Alliance's Gender Justice campaign. She also participated in an intergenerational dialogue with the Youth Community of Practice as part of mobilizing young people of faith around gender equality.

Parliament of the World's Religions (PoWR):

This is the oldest, largest, most diverse and inclusive Global Interfaith event with peoples of faith advocating for a more just, peaceful, and sustainable world. The 2018 PoWR took place in Toronto, Canada. With more than 10,000 persons of faith and conscience from 80 nations and more than 200 unique spiritual backgrounds, the space offered an opportunity to network and build relationships that had the potential of contributing to the work of UN Women. Lopa Banerjee, UN Women's Director of the Civil Society Division spoke at two panels: a) Religion and the Work of the United Nations and b) Women of Faith Speak Out: Towards Resetting the Global Moral Compass. She emphasized the creation of a culture that encourages gender equality within the faith movement. She also highlighted the importance of strengthening the voice of the feminist as they challenge the patriarchal ideologies that condone the subservience of women in religion and society, rejecting any form of discrimination, whether based on sex, race, ethnicity, color, belief, sexual orientation or any other factor while promoting equality, participation, inclusiveness and the collective good. UN Women also convened a networking and mentoring session with the Parliament's Next Generation of Leaders (young women of faith).

The Network for Religious and Traditional Peacemakers (NRTP):

UN Women is working towards strengthening the collaboration with different faith actors, feminist religious organizations, institutions, and actors who are successfully challenging patriarchal norms and ideologies and are generating new interpretations of religious beliefs that support the equality of women and men. It is working with NRTP in ensuring inclusivity in the work of the network with a focus on the intersections of faith work in the humanitarian as well as post-conflict areas.

Muslim for progressive Values (MPV):

UN Women offers platforms for public discourse on faith and gender equality. It supported MPV in the development of AIM, a coalition of progressive Muslim individuals and organizations across all nationalities, races, and sectarian affiliations with the sole aim of consolidating, coordinating, and mobilizing the efforts of Muslim actors to counter radical, intolerant, and supremacist narratives of Islam and attitudes held in Muslim communities in Muslim-majority and Muslim-minority countries. These platforms amplify the voices of faith movements and actors that demonstrate progressive values around human rights ensuring the active participation of women in different consultations and UN Women advocacy events. Between 2019 and 2023, UN Women will create different platforms aimed at fast tracking the repeal of discriminatory laws in six thematic areas in 100 countries and expected to address the legal needs of over 100 million women and girls.

MPV is a partner in UN Women’s response to the adverse impact of discriminatory laws on women and girls with a focus on promoting equality in family relations by repealing gender discriminatory personal status laws in one or more of the following: marriage, divorce, parental rights and inheritance.

Resources/Publications

- ❖ [Religious leaders at the forefront of ending gender-based violence in Ethiopia](#)
- ❖ [From where I stand: Haidara Djeneba Sy](#)
- ❖ [Coverage: UN Women Executive Director in the United Arab Emirates](#)
- ❖ [Religion and Gender Equality](#)



Source: UN Women

WORLD BANK (WB)

At the Annual Meetings of the World Bank and IMF in Bali, Indonesia in October 2018, and as part of their Civil Society Policy Forum (CSPF), a number of FBOs hosted a session entitled “Results for Children: High-Level Advocacy Forum on Investing in Early Childhood Development” on October 10th. The session planners were members of the World Bank stewarded initiative – The Moral Imperative to End Extreme Poverty, which was launched in 2015. The Arigatou Foundation took the lead on organizing this special event on behalf of, and convening a number of FBOs, including the World Council of Churches and the Joint Learning Initiative on Faith and Local Communities (JLI/LFC). Spurred by the conviction that a child’s early experiences are formative for life outcomes.

This faith-led high-level advocacy forum posed critical questions regarding how best to improve the reach and quality of services for children aged 0-3 by exploring the experiences of faith actors and how these inspire policy and service innovations and investments.

The session objectives included making the case for greater investment in effective early childhood services for the 0-3 age group with a special focus on protection of children at risk of violence, poverty, abuse, premature death, stunting, malnutrition/hunger; identifying innovative partnerships with the UN, World Bank and other development actors to scale up faith inspired pathways for protection of children at risk; and revitalizing protection for at risk children through evidence based on faith-inspired services and programming to achieve the SDGs.

The key outputs of this event were scaled up advocacy for Early Childhood Development (ECDP- at high levels of policy and decision-making; securing commitments by participating delegations for the revitalization, modernization and greater investment in ECD programs, services and institutional arrangements; co-locating innovation, evidence-building and continuous service improvement as the basis for planning and evaluating policy, planning, interventions and investments in ECD; and a commitment to a shared ECD Institutional architecture built on partnerships between state and social sectors (especially faith-based and faith-inspired actors).

Resources/Publications

- ❖ [Faith, the World Bank Group, and Ending Poverty](#)
- ❖ [Global Religious and Faith-Based Organization Leaders Issue Call and Commitment to End Extreme Poverty by 2030](#)
- ❖ [Ending Extreme Poverty: A Moral and Spiritual Imperative](#), a “Moral Imperative” statement developed by a multi-faith drafting committee convened by the World Bank Group



Source: World Bank

WORLD FOOD PROGRAMME (WFP)

WFP's partners with faith leaders, faith-inspired organizations and religious communities, acknowledging that ending hunger is possible only through meaningful collaboration at all levels of society, and that the principles of humanity and sustainable development to which WFP adheres are shared as a central pillar in all religious traditions. The importance WFP places on the contributions of religious traditions towards ending hunger is enshrined in WFP's "Whole of Society" approach. WFP works with more than 1,000 community-based organizations worldwide and many of them have a faith-inspired mission. Moving forward, WFP is committed to advancing its partnership with faith-based partners in several areas, including joint advocacy, capacity strengthening and country-level collaboration.

WFP joined their faith partners on 21 May - the Global Day of Prayer to End Famine - in their call for immediate and concerted action. WFP maintains that faith communities are vital partners in the global effort to respond swiftly and effectively to the threat of famine, and that religious leaders have a powerful voice to call for action. WFP supports these community leaders, with the intention of bringing their own (WFP) expertise and capacities to work at scale, and to mobilize technical know-how and apply it.

Resources/Publications

- ❖ Joint press release: Comunicado con Motivo del Dia Mundial de la Alimentación; <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hEn430hny5o&feature=youtu.be>
- ❖ Brochure with brief examples of WFP's partnerships with faith-inspired organizations: [Inter-religious Engagement for Zero Hunger](#)
- ❖ [Voices of Faith: Statements from religious leaders and actors](#)
- ❖ [Inter-religious engagement for Zero Hunger](#)

APPENDIX I: MISSION, OBJECTIVES, ACTIVITIES OF THE UN-IATF-RELIGION

Mission Statement

The IATF-FBOs supports the work of UN staff, towards the shared objective of learned, strategic and sustained engagement with key partners in the faith-based world, to support respective and collective efforts to realize international development goals.

Objectives

- Provide a knowledge exchange on the intersections of religion and religious actors with the UN system's mandate on human rights, sustainable development and peace and security;
- Provide an internal resource pool on experiences of and lessons from partnerships with FBOs within the UN, as well as with other governmental counterparts;
- Strengthen the integration of reliable FBO partnerships within the UN systems' broader civil society outreach and provide informed policy guidance upon request.

Activities: To that end, the Inter-Agency Task Force members endeavours to:

- Serve as a convener of multilateral experience and expertise around engagement with religious actors, within the UN and with international intergovernmental counterparts, on the intersections of the UN's pillars on human rights, peace and security and sustainable development, with issues of religion and faith, based on diverse UN experiences, evidence and analysis;
- Host policy dialogues with faith-based partners and specialists on religion, sustainable development and diplomacy;
- Share tools, guidelines, information and other capacity building resources including strategies of engagement, around ongoing outreach and engagement between diverse UN offices and faith-based NGOs, religious leaders as well as diverse religious institutions;
- Provide quarterly fora ('safe spaces') for the UN system members, to internally reflect on and critically analyze experiences, lessons, challenges and best practices gleaned through diverse initiatives with religion and faith-based actors at country, regional and global levels;
- Support and advise UN system members in developing and/or ensuring clarity and consistency in outreach to/with faith-based partners, to systematize and strategically inform the modalities of engagement around different development, peace and security, as well as human rights endeavors;
- Seek to catalyze regular UN system-wide activities and initiatives with a view to engaging faith actors in a learned and strategic manner around shared global objectives.

APPENDIX II: UN-SYSTEM WIDE CRITERIA OF ENGAGEMENT WITH FAITH-BASED ACTORS

UN Task Force Criteria of Engagement with Faith-Based Actors

The following criteria are culled from the record of respective UN offices' and agencies' own engagements and outreach with faith actors for any event, initiative, (joint) programming and/or project-based deliverable, and are required to guide the outreach to faith actors across the UN system around efforts taking place at the global level. These criteria are in line with UN values and principles and support the realization of its mandates in human rights, sustainable development and peace and security.

General criteria: Balance must be sought as regards:

- Representation of all faiths and denominations: This references religious representation – using the UN framework lines – i.e. per number of global adherents; inclusive of all faith traditions, including diversity within the largest faith traditions and also inclusive of traditional and indigenous faiths.
- Regional representation: All geographic regions of the world, in addition to a balance between those who work at global, regional and national levels.
- Gender representation: Genders present at the meetings and initiatives, as well as sensitivity to the specific gendered needs and expertise of the beneficiaries of the intended project.
- All aspects of the thematic area(s) entailed and cross-cutting concerns covered: inclusiveness as regards the range of thematic expertise brought to the specific agenda.
- Non-governmental religious actors should be legally registered in at least one Member State of the UN.
- Preference can be given to organizations actively working to provide the services and/or advocacy and/or capacity under discussion (i.e. to complement the representation of religious or faith leaders).
- No objection has been raised by relevant UN country offices regarding a possible criminal case against the organization or individual where active.
- Actors should have a track record of acting in conformity with UN values and principles.
- NGOs should not be listed as a terrorist organization according to UN terrorist list(s).

ANNEX III – TERMS OF REFERENCE FOR MULTI-FAITH ADVISORY COUNCIL



The UN Inter-Agency Task Force on Religion TERMS OF REFERENCE FOR MULTI-FAITH/FBO ADVISORY COUNCIL

BACKGROUND

The United Nations Interagency Task Force on Religion and Sustainable Development (IATF-Religion) was set up in 2010, to provide policy guidance around engaging with faith-based actors, deepen UN system staff capacities on/around intersections of religion with the UN pillars of development, human rights and peace and security dynamics, as well as provide strategic policy guidance on the above.

The Advisory Council of Faith-Based Organizations to the UN IATF-Religion is an informal and voluntary entity, composed of the UN system’s faith-based partners, reflecting the diversity of religions, regional and national presence, and covering thematic areas which mirror the UN’s mandate.

THEMATIC AREAS OF FOCUS AGREED SHARED STRATEGIC PRIORITIES BETWEEN UN AND FBO PARTNERS[1] for THE 2030 AGENDA FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT AND SUSTAINING PEACE AGENDA:

- Environment (including forests, climate change and resource efficiency)
- Migration (including children, trafficking, education)
- Gender Justice
- Financing for Development
- Peacemaking and Security (including food security, peace-building and reconciliation, and humanitarian engagement)

RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE ADVISORY COUNCIL

The Advisory Council will provide strategic advise to the UN Interagency Task Force in order to:

- *Support the United Nations system through strengthened human rights’ based policy advocacy within and outside of the UN system;*
- *Support in coordinating direct and systematic outreach, interaction and engagement with faith-based and faith-inspired entities, and between faith-based NGOs and UN entities;* and
- *Enhance focus on and knowledge around religious representation and dynamics at and within the United Nations.*

The Advisory Council shall abide by the rules, regulations and principles of the United Nations, and be composed according to the common guidelines for NGO engagement in the UN system.

To that end, the DUTIES/ RESPONSIBILITIES of the Advisory Council shall include:

- Taking the lead to co-design and implement (at least) one annual joint UN IATF-R and FBO Strategic Review of Partnerships, as well as contribute to the Annual Symposia on Religion and Foreign Affairs.
- Promoting and raising awareness on the work of the United Nations within their respective networks and constituencies globally through advocacy and outreach initiatives - using both traditional and new media.
- Serving as, and advising as regards to, speakers at United Nations meetings, workshops and conferences on the above agreed upon themed areas, as and when required by the UN IATF-R members.
- Providing a short Report annually on its activities, assessment of impact, and recommendations to enhance policy coordination and collaboration, to be included in the UN IATF-Religion Annual Report, which is shared with the UN System and diverse partner entities.

MEMBERSHIP and ELIGIBILITY

- The FBO Advisory Council shall be composed of faith-based and/or faith-inspired legally registered NGOs (at least in one member state) who have partnered (or are partnering) on advocacy, and/or are implementing partners of/with UN system entity members of the UN IATF-R, with a preference for those with, or in the process of seeking ECOSOC accreditation.
- Members will act within the capacity as Advisory Council members, and officially represent such, as and when requested or approved by the UN IATF-R.

SELECTION of MEMBERS

Advisory Council Members will be selected by UN system members of the UN IATF-R according to the “Criteria for Religious Engagement” developed by the UN Task Force.

Each UN member of the UN IATF-R will be asked to nominate between 3-5 partner FBOs. The FBOs nominated by more than one entity will be prioritized for the short list.

In addition to an established track record of acting in conformity with UN values and principles, and giving preference to those with UN-ECOSOC accreditation, the criteria for selection of which FBOs serve as Advisory Council members require a balance of the following:

- Religious organizational representation (i.e. covering diverse religions/faiths/denominations, ecumenical and interfaith);
- Thematic area(s) of expertise and interventions (development, humanitarian, human rights and peace and security);
- Gender;
- Youth; and
- Presence (global, regional and local).

STRUCTURE

The Advisory Council should not exceed forty FBO Representatives.
The Members may choose Co-Chairs if deemed helpful to communication among each other.
The Co-Chairs should represent diverse faith-based entities.

TERM

FBOs will be appointed for a one year term, renewable for a total of two additional years.

DECISION-MAKING

If and when necessary, each organizational member of the Council shall have one equal vote.

Any externally appointed advisors/observers will have observer status and no voting power.

RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE UN IATF-R TOWARDS THE FAITH-BASED ADVISORY GROUP

- Make available materials on the work of the United Nations and emerging issues related to religion, religious engagement, and each UN Task Force relevant report, data or analysis;
- Encourage the inclusion of FBO Advisory Council members in activities and initiatives of the United Nations' members of IATF-R;
- Disseminate the relevant publications and programme materials and outcomes of the FBO Advisory Council Members among the UN entities and operational offices;
- Provide policy, strategic, tactical advise and facilitation/mediation and connectivity with and within UN entities, to FBO Advisory Council members if/when requested;
- When available, UN Task Force members may provide resources to support the implementation of Advisory Council Members' activities based on mutual consent between the FBO and the UN entity/entities. However, members of the FBO Advisory Council will not receive any remuneration from the UN IATF-R.

COMMUNICATION with the UN IATF-REL

The Advisory Council members will communicate with all members of the UN IATF-REL, and can do so either individually (keeping all members copied/informed), or choose to do so via the IATF-R Convenor/Chair.

TERMINATION of MEMBERSHIP

Members of the Advisory Council will be removed by the UN IATF-REL members, if the UN entity/entities deem a misuse the UN logo, flag or engagement in activities contrary to the Organization's principles.

[1] As agreed during the UN-FBO "Strategic Retreat on Engaging with religious actors for the Realisation of the SDGs" April 5, 2017.

APPENDIX IV – MEMBERS OF THE FAITH ADVISORY COUNCIL OF THE UN INTERAGENCY TASK FORCE ON RELIGION (2018-2019)

ACT Alliance
Adventist Development and Relief Agency/ADRA
Al-Azhar University: Observatory for Tolerance and Dialogue Centre for Population Studies
Alliance of Religions and Conservation/ARC
Arigatou International
Bunmi Project @ the Oxford Center for Hindu Studies
Church of Latter Day Saints/LDS
Church of Sweden
Finn Church Aid/FCA
GIWA (Global Interfaith WASH Alliance)
Global One
GreenFaith
Inter-Religious Climate and Ecology Network
INERELA/International Network of Religious Leaders Living With HIV and AIDS
Islamic Foundation for Ecology and Sciences
Islamic Relief Worldwide
Jewish Theological Seminary – Milstein Center, USA
KAICIID Dialogue Centre
Lutheran World Federation/LWF
Musawah
Muslims for Progressive Values (MPV)
Parliament of World Religions (PoWR)

Princeton University - Office of Religious Life & The Chapel
Rabita Muhammadiya, <i>Centre for Research and Studies</i>
Anglical Communion with plus Rose Castle Foundation
Sant Egidio
Tzu Chi Buddhist Foundation
Tanenbaum
The Interfaith Center of Sustainable Development
The Network for Religious and Traditional Peacemakers
United Religions Initiative
World WYCA
World Evangelical Alliance/WEA
Worldvision International

ANNEX V – REPORT OF THE ANNUAL KOFI ANNAN
UNGA FAITH BRIEFINGS (Separate Document)