



2025 ETHIOPIA HARMONY WEEK CELEBRATION

AFRICA'S FAITH COMMUNITIES:
ADVANCING THE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS

MAY 12-14, 2025



Welcoming the African Union as a G20 member and
in commemoration of the 2025 World Interfaith
Harmony Week and the Golden Rule Day.

Concept Note

A Conference on Africa's Faith Communities:
Advancing the Sustainable Development Goals, the
African Union Agenda 2063 and G20 South Africa's
2025 Process.

The Inter-Religious Council of Ethiopia, the United Religions Initiative-Africa and the G20 Interfaith Forum, in partnership with the African Union - Citizens and Diaspora Directorate (CIDO) and the African Union - Economic, Social and Cultural Council (ECOSOCC), are organizing a two-day interfaith conference on the theme of **“The Role of Faith Communities in Africa: Accelerating the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), the African Union Agenda 2063, and G20 South Africa's 2025 Process.”** The conference will take place in Addis Ababa, the headquarters of the African Union, on May 13 and 14, 2025 (with May 12 as an arrival date).

The conference will bring together religious and traditional leaders, interfaith and faith based organizations, the diplomatic communities, policy makers, NGOs, scholars, and all other stakeholders from Africa and outside of Africa. H.E. Taye Atske Selassie, President of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia is Guest of Honor.

Background Information

For the last two years, in connection with the commemoration of the United Nations World Interfaith harmony Week and the celebration of the Golden Rule Day, the Inter-Religious Council of Ethiopia, the United Religions Initiative-Africa and the G20 Interfaith Forum, in partnership with African Union - Citizens and Diaspora Directorate (CIDO) and the African Union -Economic, Social and Cultural Council (ECOSOCC), have organized an annual interfaith conference to promote interfaith collective action in Africa aimed at fostering interfaith & intercultural harmony, peace, freedom of religion or belief, human dignity, mutual respect, development, preservation of environment, and at countering hate speech, violence and xenophobia.

The organizers of the annual interfaith conference strongly believe in the need of promoting constructive dialogue among different faith and religious followers to enhance peaceful coexistence, mutual understanding, human dignity, social justice, development, preservation of environment and cooperation for positive change among people of diverse religions, spiritual expressions and indigenous traditions in Africa.

The organizers also believe in the paramount importance of faith communities for accelerating the SDGs, the AU's Agenda 2063 and the G20 Process. Religion and its associated institutions have existed since the inception of humanity and continue to be a pervasive reality for the majority of Africans and the rest of the world. Consequently, religion significantly influences people's thoughts and actions, thus positioning faith communities as major contributors to societal processes, including addressing contemporary challenges encapsulated in the United Nation's 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Furthermore, concepts indispensable for development, such as justice, peace, and solidarity find resonance in virtually all faith traditions. Throughout history, faith actors have been actively engaged in initiatives aimed at feeding the hungry, caring for the sick, and assisting the marginalized in society. In essence, faith actors have long been involved in development endeavors, even before the term "development" itself was coined.

Religious, spiritual, indigenous, and traditional values and wisdom influence the thoughts and actions of billions of people and inspire organizations and initiatives around Africa and the rest of the world. Faith communities play a critical role in fostering dialogue, learning, and collaboration to advance the SDGs. Significant contributions to sustainable development and humanitarian aid are made through the unique knowledge, resources, and networks of these actors, who reach even the most remote corners of the earth.

It is to be recalled that in 2023 the Inter-Religious Council of Ethiopia, United Religions Initiative-Africa and the G20 Interfaith Forum made an appeal for G20 to accept African Union as a member of G20.

Representing over 80% of the global economy, the Group of 20 (G20) is the main multilateral platform for global economic and financial cooperation. Discussions at the group's yearly meeting deeply relate to Africa.

The organizers are extremely happy that in 2024 the AU has been made a permanent member of the G20, in a move that has been broadly welcomed for giving the continent an important voice on key global issues. The G20 represented around 85% of global GDP and 75% of global trade, as well as two-thirds of the world's population, even prior to the AU joining.

The permanent members of the G20 are now Argentina, Australia, Brazil, Canada, China, France, Germany, India, Indonesia, Italy, Japan, South Korea, Mexico, Russia, Saudi Arabia, South Africa, Türkiye, United Kingdom and United States, along with the EU and the AU.

The African Union has a unique opportunity to shape the global agenda following its accession to the G20. With four consecutive G20 Presidencies from the Global South and South Africa set to preside in 2025, the AU is well-positioned to push for key reforms that support Africa's development.

The overall purpose of this interfaith conference is for faith communities in Africa to work in partnership with all stake holders including the AU to accelerate development, peacebuilding and to build key relationships. This should make it possible to pursue effective solutions and to drive productive policy discussions with FBOs, governments and multilaterals on the essential role of strategic faith engagement to achieve the SDGs and Agenda 2063.

The organizers of the interfaith conference also anticipate that concrete and practical recommendations will be made with respect to a number of priority issues to Africa to achieve SDGs and Agenda 2063.

- Peace-building Action and Conflict Resolution
- Human Dignity and Human Security
- Freedom of Religion or Belief
- Refugee and Displaced Populations, Trafficking, and Modern Forms of Slavery
- Children's Issues
- Women's Empowerment
- Preservation of the Environment and Climate Finance
- Alleviation of poverty
- Fostering Food security and Humanitarian assistance
- Role of Faith Actors Supporting Anti-Corruption Measures
- Debt Relief and Financial Sustainability
- Education
- Advancing Africa's interests on the global stage
- Highlighting Africa's voice on critical issues including debt transparency, economic governance, and sustainable development

The G20 is the forum where the most important global economics conversations are taking place. In many ways, it can be considered as the economic equivalent to the United Nations Security Council.

The annual interfaith conference is taking place in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, the headquarters of the African Union. Ethiopia is a beautiful mosaic of different cultures, faiths, and traditions. It is a place with a long and noble history giving rise to ethnic, linguistic, and cultural diversity. It is country that has never been colonized and as such is a symbol of freedom and also a landmark for interfaith harmony. It is clearly stated in the constitution of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia that every citizen has a right to freedom of religion, belief and opinion and that all religions and religious practices, cultures, peoples, nations and nationalities are equally recognized. State and religion are separate in Ethiopia. Ethiopia is also known as "the land of origins," where many important archeological and paleontological milestones have been uncovered. The earliest human ancestors were discovered in the Afar Depression in northeastern Ethiopia, with Lucy being the most famous one.

The Golden Rule Day was also proclaimed in Ethiopia in 2007 and since then different religious & spiritual leaders, organizations, institutions; world known athletes, Governors and Mayors in over 120 countries, and others, including the G20 Interfaith Forum, have endorsed and proclaimed April 5th as the Golden Rule Day. The aim is to promote the teaching of the Golden Rule as it is a practical action to foster peace, human dignity, harmony and to counter hate speech and violence.

The organizers of the event acknowledge that the UN General Assembly resolution on World Interfaith Harmony Week will help to create a world-wide opportunity for collective action in pursuit of advancing the teaching of the Golden Rule. In this interrelated and globalized world, the Golden Rule and the teaching of Ubuntu which means “*I am because we are,*” is more important than ever. It embodies a fundamental human value needed today as the basis for peaceful co-existence, mutual respect, trust, compassion, reciprocity and promotion of human dignity and freedom of religions or belief.

May Peace, Golden Rule, Ubuntu and Interfaith Harmony Prevail on Earth

