

G20 Interfaith Forum Concludes in Addis Ababa with Emphasis on Solutions, Balanced Transitions, and African Leadership

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ADDIS ABABA, Ethiopia – The G20 Interfaith Forum concluded its landmark two-day African Regional Conference in Addis Ababa Wednesday, capping a series of dynamic sessions with a powerful call for balanced transitions and a renewed commitment to Africa’s leadership in shaping global policy. The event, hosted at the Hilton Hotel, brought together religious leaders, policymakers, civil society, and youth from across Africa and the world to address urgent challenges and advance the Sustainable Development Goals, the African Union’s Agenda 2063, and the G20 priorities.

Day Two Highlights: Collaborative Solutions and Action-Oriented Dialogue

The second day began with a focus on women’s and youth leadership, featuring a plenary session on “Women’s Leadership and Gender Justice” and another on “Youth Leadership and Empowerment.” Speakers and participants highlighted the need to center the voices of women and young people in peacebuilding, education, and economic opportunity, emphasizing that sustainable progress depends on their full inclusion.

A central feature of the day was the innovative Feedback Sessions, open think tanks where participants broke into three groups to tackle some of Africa’s most pressing issues. Each session focused on a specific challenge: Women’s Issues, Peace Issues, or Sustainability. Facilitators guided lively discussions, encouraging participants to share practical solutions and best practices from their communities. The collaborative format allowed for the cross-pollination of ideas and the development of actionable recommendations, which will be forwarded to the G20 process and the African Union.

Concluding Reflections: Calls for Balance and Realistic Transitions

The conference culminated in a closing plenary featuring remarks from key leaders. W. Cole Durham Jr., President of the G20 Interfaith Forum, summarized the day’s themes, stressing that the chaos and unpredictability of today’s world make this “an important time for rethinking the systems that exist and the way that things are.” He called for “new balance” in addressing the climate crisis, women’s empowerment, and other complex issues, noting:

"I am struck by the fact that part of what will be needed is new balance. In the world of environment and ecology, the extent of the climate crisis is such that people want to turn green tomorrow, but that won't happen politically, so we need balanced transitions," Durham said. "We need balance with women's issues-accomplishing women's empowerment without undermining roles of motherhood, and many other examples."

He ended with a call for hope:

"Many of the problems we have, insolvable as they seem, are issues that we actually do have the power to solve. We've seen millions lifted out of poverty in the last 20 years. A difference can actually be made."

Mussie Hailu, representing the organizing committee, acknowledged the diverse contributions of all attendees and led a moment of silence in memory of the late Pope Francis.

The conference closed with a prayer from the Baha'i community, symbolizing the unity and shared purpose of the gathering.

Looking Ahead

As South Africa assumes the G20 presidency, the recommendations and momentum generated by this event will inform and inspire efforts by the G20 Interfaith Forum and others to build a more just and sustainable world.

"We hope that this year we, and the rest of the world, can really be learning from Africa," Durham said.

About the G20 Interfaith Forum

The G20 Interfaith Forum seeks global solutions by collaborating with religious thought leaders and political representatives to help shape the overall G20 agenda. It draws on the vital roles that religious institutions and beliefs play in world affairs, reflecting a rich diversity of institutions, ideas, and values. Through its extensive network of networks, it helps prioritize key global policy goals and point toward practical means of implementation at every level of society.

For more information, please visit www.g20interfaith.org

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