

G20 Interfaith Forum Kicks Off Preparations for its 2021 Global Event in Italy with “Handover” Ceremony

*2021 theme underscores the need for healing and increased understanding between religions
amidst COVID-19 and overcoming inequality*

BOLOGNA, Italy, December 3, 2020 — After the successful 2020 G20 Interfaith Forum gathering of leaders from across the world, Italy's Fscire team has now taken the reins and started coordinating the 2021 G20 Interfaith Forum, slated for September in Bologna. The theme for the global gathering will be: “Time to Heal: Peace Among Cultures, Understanding Between Religions.”

To highlight the passing of the baton from Saudi Arabia to Italy, the G20 Interfaith Forum hosted an online handover ceremony which featured several speakers including Pietro Benassi, Diplomatic Advisor to the Italian Prime Minister and G20 Leading Sherpa; Elisabetta Belloni, Secretary General of the Italian Ministry for Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation; and Matteo Cardinal Zuppi, Archbishop of Bologna.

“We are honored and delighted to host the G20 Interfaith Forum in Bologna next year,” said Alberto Melloni, Secretary of Fscire. “The aim of the 2021 Interfaith Forum will be to contribute to the global discussion on interreligious dialogue by showing how knowledge can be an essential factor in neutralizing narratives that favor religious fundamentalism, theologies of discrimination, and all forms of violent extremism.”

As with the 2020 meetings, it is anticipated that key topics of focus at the 2021 Forum will include the role of religion in COVID-19 recovery, overcoming inequality and sustaining the environment.

“The Italian presidency of the G20 offers unprecedented possibilities to link political and interreligious insights,” said Katherine Marshall, Vice President of the G20 Interfaith Association. “Italy's Mediterranean position and its sophisticated appreciation for religious roles in contemporary society promise a dynamic dialogue where different perspectives can make their voices heard at the policy tables. The G20 Interfaith Forum in Bologna will bring diverse and creative voices to focus on today's urgent global agenda.”

Convened each year in the host country of the upcoming G20 Summit, the G20 Interfaith Forum offers an annual platform where a network of religiously linked institutions and initiatives engage on global agendas. The goal of the meetings is to contribute meaningful insight and recommendations that respond to and help shape the G20 Summit and thus global policy agendas.

Originating virtually from Saudi Arabia in 2020, more than 2,000 prominent religious actors participated in this year's G20 Interfaith Forum, including a broad spectrum of the world's

religious communities and leading officials and experts from international organizations, governments, academia, and civil society. The G20 Interfaith Forum announced last month its priority recommendations for consideration by G20 Summit leadership which focused on issues such as COVID-19, advancing peace and conflict resolution, empowering women, reducing structural inequality and racism and protecting the planet.

“This time of ‘handover’ in the G20 process is always filled with mixed feelings of gratitude for all that has contributed to the success of the past year along with anticipation for new opportunities opening in the next host country,” said Professor W. Cole Durham, Jr., President of the G20 Interfaith Association. “That is particularly true this year as we note the remarkable contributions of KAICIID and our Saudi Arabian hosts and as we look forward to the Italian presidency and our Italian co-organizers in Bologna. Each year brings a growing recognition that religious actors can play an extraordinary role both in providing insight and practical recommendations for the formulation and implementation of G20 level policy. In that sense, the G20 Interfaith Forum (IF20) provides an important platform and is in the process of becoming a key engagement group at the G20 policy-formation table.”

“The G20 Interfaith Forum 2020 brought together thousands of religious leaders, experts and policymakers, created some very unique spaces for dialogue on our shared global challenges, and made a clear case for why sustainable development and inclusive policymaking requires religious participation,” said Faisal bin Muaammar, Secretary General of the International Dialogue Centre (KAICIID). “I thank Saudi Arabia’s G20 Presidency for their commitment to engaging and partnering with religious communities and interfaith dialogue to solve these challenges and look forward to building continued recognition for the unique contribution of religious communities and deepening the dialogue with the Italian Presidency of the G20 in 2021.”

About the G20 Process

The Group of Twenty, or the G20, is the premier forum for international economic cooperation. The G20 brings together the leaders of leading economies on Earth.

Collectively, G20 members represent around 80% of the world’s economic output, two-thirds of the global population and three-quarters of international trade. Throughout the year, representatives from G20 countries gather to discuss financial and socioeconomic issues as well as broader humanitarian issues targeted by the UN’s Sustainable Development Goals.

The G20 Leaders’ Summit brings together world leaders to discuss international economic cooperation and broader social concerns. The participants in the G20 Summit are Heads of State or Government from 19 countries and the European Union. In addition, leaders of guest countries and representatives of invited regional and international organizations participate in the Summit.

About Fscire

Fscire is a research institute specialized in History of Christianity and other religions. It was established in 1953 first as a library, then as a research institute, and in 1990 was formally recognized as a Foundation by the President of the Italian Republic. As a private foundation, independent from churches and universities, Fscire participates in and promotes cooperation with international research centers and networks. Fscire is the Project Coordinator of RelReS (Research Infrastructure on Religious Studies) which is funded by the Horizon 2020 research and innovation program, and the Team Leader of RESILIENCE (Religious studies infrastructure: tools, experts, connections, and centers).

About the G20 Interfaith Forum

The G20 Interfaith Forum seeks global solutions by collaborating with religious thought leaders and political representatives. It builds on vital roles that religious institutions and beliefs play in world affairs, reflecting a rich diversity of institutions, ideas, and values. The membership includes interfaith and intercultural organizations, religious leaders, scholars, development and humanitarian entities, and business and civil society actors.

For more information, please visit www.g20interfaith.org.