**The 2020 G20 Interfaith Forum- European Online Regional Consultation**

Introductory Meeting

Date: Monday 29th June 2020, 15:00-16:30

Place: online on Zoom

**Context**: The Introductory Meeting is the official opening activity of the G20i European Online Regional Consultation, a process which will span a month between 29 June to 30 July 2020, involving three working groups who will produce a set of regionally-specific recommendation papers to feed into the G20i global process and to relevant European policymakers. The European Consultation is one of six regional consultations taking place worldwide, all of which are organized by KAICIID with three partners: the [G20 Interfaith Forum Association](https://www.g20interfaith.org/), the [United Nations Alliance of Civilizations](https://www.unaoc.org/) (UNAOC) and Saudi Arabia’s National Committee for Interfaith and Intercultural Dialogue.

The Introductory Meeting was a 90-minute webinar, in which prominent representatives of the policy-making sector and Europe’s faith communities, as well as the G20i Organizing Committee presented the context, rationale and format of the Consolation process, underlining the importance of the G20 Presidency’s chosen themes and explaining how they synergize with European priorities.

Participants: 104 participants attended the event, and the vast majority remained throughout the entire meeting. They posed 35 questions to the speakers in writing, showing serious engagement. Participants included AF member Andrew Smith and three speakers are linked to KAICIID.

Speakers (in order of appearance)

* **His Eminence Metropolitan Emmanuel of France** introduced the G20 Interfaith Forum on behalf of the Organizing Committee, detailing the topics and working groups, and the ambition for the G20i to officially join the other G20 streams. He drew attention to the economic and spiritual hardship Europe is suffering due to the COVID-19 pandemic and urged collaborative approaches to combat it. The Metropolitan also took part in a discussion with the other religious speakers, in which he promoted the Green New Deal and environmental protection to prevent hunger.
* **His Excellency Mr. Margaritis Schinas,** **European Commission Vice-President for Promoting Our European Way of Life**, began by thanking KAICIID, which he said he had seen develop since 2012 to become a true centre of excellence. He explained how his portfolio fosters dialogue with interfaith organizations gave a strong commitment to continue that work. He emphasized how much policy makers had learned from religious communities during the pandemic, who played a remarkable role in public wellbeing whilst observing health guidelines. H.E. Schinas raised a joint challenge “translate discussions on values into concrete activities and projects” and highlighted artificial intelligence (AI), gender equality, and vaccines among topics which preoccupy the European Union (EU) and which it looks forward to working on, in the G20 and otherwise.
* **Chief Rabbi Pinchas Goldschmidt**, President of the Conference of European Rabbis emphasized the importance of protecting holy sites in Europe. He strongly criticized slaughter regulations which will soon come into force in Belgium which could make life as and observing Jew impossible and calling for fair treatment of minorities.
* **His Excellency Grand Mufti Nedžad Grabus** of the Islamic Community in Slovenia explained that Muslims and other minorities in European countries face challenges in terms of perception and unequal treatment. Discrimination because of skin-colour, faith and gender must be stopped and a consultative approach adopted to support better education and more active citizenship.

The meeting was moderated by **Dr. Elizabeta Kitanovic, Executive Secretary of the Conference of European Churches,** with **Frances Rose, Programme Manager at KAICIID,** providing technical guidance and outlining next steps to all the participants who are all invited to become involved in the rest of the consultation process.