**Panel Discussion 1: Countering Hate Speech and Social Media**

Dr. Mustafa Ali, Secretary General of the Global Network of Religions for Children and Director of Arigatou International – Nairobi

@Mustafa\_Y\_Ali @ArigatouGNRC

No man is born hating another because of the color of their skin, background, religion, or tribe. Various forms of the Golden Rule guide our lives as people of faith, but hate speech and discrimination are on the rise. We are joined by a distinguished panel tonight to discuss and address this issue.

Dr. Vinya Ariyaratne, President of Sarvodaya Shramadana Movement, Sri Lanka •

@AriyaratneVinya

With the advancement of science and technology, there are multiple channels of communication, some of which incite anger and violence, but we can draw from the traditions of all faiths and combine them with science and technology for the upliftment of all mankind.

Dr. Kamal Boraiqa Abdelsalam Hassan, member of Al-Azhar Centre for Dialogue and Supervisor at AlAzhar Observatory for combating terrorism at Al-Azhar University, Egypt; KAICIID Fellow •

@AlAzharUniv

Hate speech does not believe in the value of dialogue, common citizenship, coexistence, and speech. It negates the humanity in which God has created us all. It also negates the principles of religions, and Islam in particular, which call for preserving the unity of a society.

Ms. Simona Cruciani, Political Affairs Officer at the UN Office on Genocide Prevention and the Responsibility to Protect •

@UN\_GP\_RtoP

Incitement to violence is an indicator for atrocity crimes. We must engage religious leaders and actors as agents of prevention in our fight to ensure that no one is killed in atrocity crimes and genocide.

Countering and addressing hate speech, which is a precursor to incitement to violence, is a core priority of the United Nations. We are concerned about growing global trends of hate speech.

Hate speech must not be prevented, under the shield of freedom of speech and expression. However, it can be countered by defending victims and creating environments conducive to tolerance.

H.E. Grand Mufti Dr. Nedžad Grabus, Mufti of the Islamic Community in Slovenia •

Hate speech destroys social relations in our societies. Leaders must make a balance between Freedom of Expression and #HateSpeech. Inciting violence between people must be stopped wherever it occurs. However, conversations that encourage debate, even on the most sensitive issues, must be acknowledged.

How do we as religious people speak about other religions in our meetings? How do we speak about others? Our belief in God Almighty should help us in our understanding and cooperation among people of different faiths.

Rev. Susan Hayward, Senior Advisor for Religion and Inclusive Societies at the U.S. Institute of Peace (USIP) •

@SusieOHayward @HarvardDivinity

A good amount of hate speech targets or polices women, especially those who are outspoken or step outside of normal gender norms.

Chief Rabbi David Rosen, International Director of Interreligious Affairs at the American Jewish Committee (AJC) and member of KAICIID Board of Directors •

@AJCGlobal

Anti-Semitism serves as a model for us to understand the different aspects and impulses of hatred in society and history. Hostility toward others, whether it’s real or perceived, normally relates to some particular group that has the capacity to ‘undermine’ another group. One clear reason we understand for this history of prejudice is that Jews were typically the ‘other.’ That has added and abetted scapegoating and conspiracy theories, seen in this pandemic.

Ms. Nika Saeedi, UN Policy Specialist on Gender, Political Processes and Peacebuilding at UNDP

@NikaSaeedi @UNDP

The pandemic has sparked fear and uncertainty, which drive #HateSpeech, discrimination, and violence. It fuels the ‘us vs. them’ perspective of extremist organizations. Periods of turbulence, however, can present opportunities to re-commit to common values.

Religious leaders are calling on all to adhere to the central principal of all faiths: Love thy neighbor as thyself.