

**“Responding to COVID-19, Empowering People, Safeguarding  
the Environment, and Humanitarian Aid”  
SUMMARY REPORT**



**G20 INTERFAITH FORUM  
SAUDI ARABIA**

**13-17 OCTOBER, 2020**

*Riyadh, Saudi Arabia*  
**VIRTUAL CONFERENCE**

**G20 INTERFAITH FORUM 2020  
KEY PARTNERS**



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## SUMMARY

The 2020 G20 Interfaith Forum was streamed virtually from Riyadh with leaders participating from across the globe on Oct. 13 to Oct. 17, 2020. The live streamed event was open to the public with opportunities to submit questions via chat. More than 500 experts and leaders from fields ranging from economy, law, politics, religion, development to humanitarian aid gathered for the seventh consecutive G20 Interfaith Summit. Participants came together to address crises, including the COVID-19 pandemic, climate change, disaster risk reduction, hate speech and racism. In addition to attracting leaders from most major world religions, denominations and interreligious organizations, the G20 Interfaith Forum included representatives from the United Nations, the International Dialogue Centre (KAICIID), the Organization of Islamic Cooperation, the World Muslim League, and the European Commission.

The 2020 G20 Interfaith Forum was co-organized by the G20 Interfaith Forum Association, the International Dialogue Centre (KAICIID), the United Nations Alliance of Civilizations (UNAOC), and the National Committee for Interreligious and Intercultural Dialogue in The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (NCIRD). The 2020 G20 Interfaith Forum was held in connection with, and just prior to, the fifteenth G20 Summit, which was scheduled for November 21-22, 2020 in Riyadh, The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

The agenda centered on responding to COVID-19, empowering people, safeguarding the environment and provision of humanitarian aid. As with past summits, different religious traditions or beliefs were represented including, but not limited to, Muslim, various Christian traditions, humanism, Jewish, and Konko traditions. Participants from a variety of interfaith (e.g., the King Abdullah bin Abdulaziz International Centre for Interreligious and Intercultural Dialogue – KAICIID, Parliament of the World’s Religions, Religions for Peace, United Religions Initiative) and United Nations’ agencies (e.g., United Nations Alliance of Civilizations, United Nations Sustainable Development Group, United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization) contributed to the dialogue. Representatives from seventy percent of the G20 countries participated.

Plenary sessions were designed in accordance with four sub-themes for concurrent panel discussion: 1) Religion in Peacebuilding and Conflict Prevention, 2) addressing the COVID-19 Crisis, 3) Education, Youth and Women, and 4) Protecting the Planet and Human Rights Issues. An entire day of the program was dedicated to discussing the way in which religious communities were uniquely affected by, and responding to, the COVID-19 pandemic. Discussion addressed ways in which religious communities were being scapegoated for rising infection rates in many parts of the world, ways in which religious communities were leading actors in the provision of aid for those affected by the pandemic, and the social inequities the Pandemic exposed.

I would like to offer special thanks to Janice Christie and Katherine Marshall who assisted with development of this summary.

Respectfully Submitted,



Sherrie Steiner, 2020 *G20 Interfaith Summit* Historian  
Assistant Professor of Sociology, Purdue University Fort Wayne

## **INAUGURAL SESSION:**

**Description:** This opening session was introduced with comments from the G20 Interfaith Forum 2020 Key Partners that helped frame the main topics of the 2020 Forum. Moderated by Ms. Nayana Jayarajan (The International Dialogue Centre - KAICIID), speakers were H.E. Abdullatif Al-Sheikh (Minister of Religious Affairs, Da'wah and Guidance, The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia), H.E. Faisal bin Muaammar (Secretary General of The International Dialogue Centre), H.E. Miguel Ángel Moratinos (High Representative for the United Nations Alliance of Civilizations - UNAOC), Prof. W. Cole Durham, Jr. (President of the G20 Interfaith Forum Association), H.E. Dr. Mohammad Al-Issa (Secretary General of the Muslim World League), H.E. Sheikh Abdallah Bin Bayyah (President of the Forum for Promoting Peace in Muslim Societies), His All Holiness Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew (Archbishop of Constantinople-New Rom and Ecumenical Patriarch), His Eminence Cardinal Miguel Ángel Ayuso Guixot (Titular Bishop of the Diocese of Luperciana; President of the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue, member of KAICIID Board of Directors), Chief Rabbi Pinchas Goldschmidt (President of the Jewish Religion Conference of European Rabbis), Rev. Kosho Niwano (Co-Moderator and Executive Committee Member of Religions for Peace, member of KAICIID Board of Directors), Dr. Kezevino Aram (Director of Shanti Ashram, member of KAICIID Board of Directors), H.E. Dr. Yousef bin Ahmed Al-Othaimeen (Secretary General of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation), H.E. Dr. Amina J. Mohammed (Deputy Secretary-General of the United Nations, Chair of the United Nations Sustainable Development Group), and H.E. Anthony Abbott (Former Prime Minister of Australia, Patron of the Handa Foundation).

**Ms. Nayana Jayarajan** provided described netiquette, virtual formatting, and speaker introductions.

**H.E. Abdullatif Al-Sheikh** Praise be to God and may blessing of peace be upon you. It is my great pleasure to welcome you here in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. I thank you for participating in this blessed day. Let me convey the warmest greetings of His Royal Highness, the Crown Prince. May God protect them. May I convey regards to participants which is hosted by The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. God meant for all of humanity to live to the well-known day which God Almighty mentioned in all his books brought to us by His prophets. God gave us the tools to save humanity even in light of unforeseen pandemics. The world today witnesses painful impacts and repercussions on health, humanity, economics, and society from the COVID-19 pandemic. This asks us all – governments and religious institutions and international organizations as well as civil society organizations – to stand together to deal with this pandemic and its impacts on persons and society. Religious leaders are usually close to people, so their role has grown during this crisis. The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia has evidence of this crisis while coordinating and working together with political institutions and religious institutions. For example, the Saudi Minister of Islamic Affairs took proactive and preventive measures to protect people from this pandemic. One of the most important proactive and preventive measures was to close land, sea and air ports as well as social distancing measures, to ask people to wear masks and ban the movement of people and put a ban on cities and districts to close, to implement distance learning closing universities and schools to face-to-face instruction and suspend pilgrimage. Working from home to stop public transport, declare quarantine on sports and weddings and funerals. One of the most proactive measures of religious institutions in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia was the statement of the Council of Senior Scholars<sup>1</sup> which resulted in

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<sup>1</sup> See Geldi, Mahmut. 2020. "Scholars Urge Caution Amid Pandemic on Eve of Ramadan." AA, April 23, <https://www.aa.com.tr/en/health/scholars-urge-caution-amid-pandemic-on-eve-of-ramadan/1816177>

taking up measures by the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia's government in order to protect human lives. The permanent committee for scholarly research also stressed the fact that all physicians dealing with infected people with Corona virus who are unable to take up protective gear may pray later. Also the Ministry for Social Affairs took up many protective measures together with other governmental institutions. First, to have the Friday prayer in more than 15000 mosques in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia to let imams talk about the pandemic and how to deal with it. Congregational prayers were suspended and the call to prayer was suspended. Scientific lessons and lessons to learn the Quran were suspended. All mosques were asked to sanitize, disinfect and close restrooms. The Ministry reached out to many imam scholars to participate in television programs and they asked others to spread the information to people. The Ministry from the supreme committee for Forensic Scientific Research identified measures to deal with it in The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and the Ministry for Religious Affairs were proactive to raise awareness in society how to deal with the coronavirus. We identified ways in which the Prophet supports taking precautions to protect oneself, and adopting security and health measures. People were informed about the importance of implementing such measures. It was reiterated that it is important to cooperate internationally and regionally to deal with such catastrophes relying on our good relations. The ministry for religious affairs in The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia also coordinated with the relevant institutions and decided to open mosques and prayer places for Friday prayers and congregational prayers but asked to decrease the time between the call to prayers and prayers itself and said the ceremony should not take more than 15 minutes, no food or drink should be served, worshippers should social distance during prayers, use cloth masks, bring their own carpets for prayers, not to bring children unless they are above 16 years of age, finish at home, avoid overcrowding when entering or leaving the mosque, etc.. They suspended the Haj to not spread the virus. We see the fruit of cooperation and collaboration between the institutions to deal with the crisis. As mentioned, we took a number of protective measures in accordance with World Health Organization recommendations, and we organized a special meeting to prevent the spread of the pandemic and the spread of poverty to continue the implementation of progress of sustainable development around the world. Rest assured that The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia will take up every measure to deal with the impact of COVID-19. All words of our Prophet – may peace be upon Him – came with words of compassion and forbearance of all creatures and are not intended for hardship. Whenever God's Messenger was given the choice, He would choose the easier route as long as it was not sinful to do so. Allah is gentle and He rewards gentleness. What is not grounds for harshness - He does not reward anything like it. As the Prophet said, "None (among the believers) remains patient in a land in which plague has broken out and considers that nothing will befall him except what Allah has ordained for him, but that Allah will grant him a reward similar to that of a martyr." God is compassionate and understanding and merciful. If you are traveling and sick, you are to not fast for Ramadan. In regards to prayer, you may, as the Prophet said, when called be asked for people to pray in their dwellings for mercy and compassion and forbearance. Now people do not gather in great numbers in order to protect us. Allah's Messenger said "If you hear about it (an outbreak of plague) in a land, do not go to it; but if plague breaks out in a country where you are staying, do not run away from it." This is what our international organizations and health institutions ask us to do. Quarantine. "[W]hen the Prophet would sneeze, he would cover his face with his hand or with his garment, and muffle the sound with it."<sup>2</sup> He also asked people to not blow in their drinks or breathe in their drinks. As we all know, difficulties call for relief so that there is no harm. These are the measures taken by The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia to deal with the

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<sup>2</sup> For more information on theology and hygiene, see Coruh, Hakan. 2020. "Theology, Health and Hygiene: How the Islamic Tradition Addresses the Threat of Pandemics." *ABC Religion & Ethics*, April 6, <https://www.abc.net.au/religion/theology-health-and-hygiene-in-islamic-tradition/12125014>.

coronavirus crisis - for people to live safely in agreement with the words of Allah. This was only implemented in The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and could only be done because of the close coordination and cooperation between religious institutions, regional governments and international organizations. To stand up against Islamophobia which is spreading due to some extremist groups and do not reflect the true values of humanity. We need to work together – all of us – religious institutions and governments. We need to sacrifice. Thank you to all of those who helped organize this important meeting. Thank you for your service and my gratitude to all in The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia working in various fields. We raise our hand to God Almighty – may He protect us from this pandemic. Peace be upon you.

**H.E. Faisal bin Muaammar** gave blessings and greetings indicating what a great pleasure it was for him, as a citizen of The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, to speak from Riyadh at this meeting streamed virtually across the world. COVID has taken away our chance to meet together, but using technology we have been able to bring together more than 1000 people to shape the outcome of regional consultations on some of the most challenging issues facing mankind and the G20 world leaders hosted by The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. KAICIID is an intergovernmental organization with programs and partnerships around the world. It has enjoyed a fruitful relationship with The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia which, alongside Spain, Austria and the Holy See as an observer, formed the organization to reach out for dialogue. We are no stranger to The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. We reach out to protect religious minorities, oppose hate speech, etc. We extend heartfelt congratulations to The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia's hosting of the meeting. We are grateful to the partners for their unfailing support now and through the consultation period. The Forum began in July with the first consultation between faith-based experts in the Arab region involving 500 participants from 10 religions, 70 countries, and 5 continents. The consultation has worked through other continents with consultations. This was achieved despite challenges of COVID-19. Regional consultations have contributed to this agenda. We have heard testimony on the themes considered here: climate change, gender, economic imbalance, governance. We have heard from religious leaders of different faiths united by common values to shape the human destiny of the common family. There are recommendations within the framework of the SDGs. Since its founding, KAICIID has used an approach to help establish grassroots consensus across religious and cultural boundaries. KAICIID cooperated with the UN's efforts to protect worship, holy sites, and eradication of hate speech. He spoke about other ways in which KAICIID has cooperated with the UN and became a member of the UN Alliance of Civilizations. He identified various initiatives that the global network of fellows participate. More than 200 initiatives. Over 80% of the global population identifies with a belief system. In many parts of the world where security is lacking, it is religious leaders that stand for community cohesion and well-being. The consultations that have brought us to this point has led us to stronger voices for religious leaders into the global process of policy making. I ask that full consideration be given by the Group of Twenty for inclusion of the G20 Interfaith Forum as an official engagement partner.

**H.E. Miguel Ángel Moratinos** thanked the hosts for inviting their participation in this event and acknowledged all guests. It is a great pleasure to be here with you in this important high level event. We are extremely proud of our partnership with KAICIID and the G20 Interfaith Forum in co-organizing this Forum. I am glad to see so many friends who have joined us with this forum. I want, first of all, to thank The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia for hosting this Forum. It was planned since last year to take place in Riyadh a month prior to the G20. Technology enables us to host this despite the challenges of COVID that has affected all of us. Technology has its downside magnifying the digital divide between those who have and have not. Hatemongers have spread toxic messages. We have witnessed a certain xenophobia, anti-Semitism, Islamophobia and

discrimination based on religion, belief, color, race, and gender. The world has turned inward rather than outward. This global human crisis has magnified socioeconomic injustices that have plagued society for a long time. That inequality has not been addressed. This is the time to reverse course and put them on the right track. This is the time when a different approach driven by compassion and humility can take hold. When the crisis started, everyone thought it would be an opportunity to change and improve the world. Unfortunately, that has not been the case. So, I think we have to see how the need of religious leaders working together with faith actors and state actors will be the one who can send a clear message to world leaders when they meet in Riyadh at the G20. The vast majority of people are members of spiritual communities. Although each has their own conviction, they share together a common notion to show compassion, fraternity, and respect to others regardless of their religion, race or culture. I find myself particularly inspired by *A Document on Human Fraternity for World Peace and Living Together* co-signed by Pope Francis and others.<sup>3</sup> I was humbled to have an audience with both of them last year. Many things in this historic document were well developed. The Preamble of the *Charter of the United Nations* – we the peoples – speaks about universal human rights.<sup>4</sup> Faith across the faith spectrum emphasizes equal rights for all human beings. It cannot surprise us that since the pandemic we have witnessed how religious organisations have embodied the principle of ‘leave no one behind’ and the ‘fight for social justice’ toward those who are hardest to reach. Faith actors have been on the front lines when this hit home. It was encouraging to see how they supported unity and compassion and came forward to UN Secretary-General António Guterres’ call for warring parties across the world to lay down their weapons in support of the bigger battle against COVID-19.<sup>5</sup> Faith has often been the voice for consolation and hope. Many religious leaders have the capacity and the trust of the community they serve. But with trust comes the responsibility to promote messages of gender equality, challenging misinformation and rumors, challenging hate speech, caring for internal displaced persons, indigenous people, people with disabilities and other members of marginalized groups to advocate for their access to vaccines and sharing information and publicly standing against statements that encourage violence against people. In this context, *A Joint Call for Solidarity, Compassion and Unity* was issued with Adama Dieng, The Special Advisor for the Prevention of Genocide, to encourage faith based organizations to remain strongly engaged with respective constituencies to respond to the current crisis.<sup>6</sup> We are also working with the Office of Human Rights and Genocide Prevention to operationalize the *Global Call to Action Against Poverty*.<sup>7</sup> We launched on Sept. 29<sup>th</sup> a communication campaign plan of action. I invite you to join me in promoting the plan by using the hashtag #forSafeWorship to foster solidarity and protect religious sites and worshippers. Check out the dedicated website.<sup>8</sup> We have long recognized religious organizations. Collaboration with you is important for conflict resolution and trust building. History has shown that dialogue is not a simple process. The situation can give way to parallel monologues. We have to pray for sustainable dialogue among ourselves. I conclude with Pope Francis’ words ‘We must put human dignity back at the centre and the pillar will be the structure we need’. We should build a better world with the human at the center. The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia has an historic responsibility and we have the responsibility to prepare the meeting in November in Riyadh. The summit leaders must provide some suggestions. Which will be the main ones? The

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<sup>3</sup> See [http://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/travels/2019/outside/documents/papa-francesco\\_20190204\\_documento-fratellanza-umana.html](http://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/travels/2019/outside/documents/papa-francesco_20190204_documento-fratellanza-umana.html).

<sup>4</sup> See <https://www.un.org/en/charter-united-nations/index.html>

<sup>5</sup> See <https://news.un.org/en/story/2020/03/1059972>

<sup>6</sup> See <https://www.unaoc.org/2020/03/a-joint-call-for-solidarity-compassion-and-unity/>

<sup>7</sup> See <https://gcap.global/>

<sup>8</sup> <https://www.unaoc.org/2020/10/global-call-to-action-for-safe-worship/>

essential one that this group could provide to these leaders is these ethical actions. The world needs ethics, and spirituality that is conducted with moral values and principles. This is our main task. Let's work together in order that the five day discussion can provide to the G20 a real platform for a better world.

**Prof. W. Cole Durham, Jr.** acknowledged the participants and the steering committee members offered a welcome. This event could not have been achieved without monumental efforts by our key partners. We extend gratitude. The G20 Forum emerged in its present form in 2014 Australia. There were antecedents, but the current structure with its network of networks, NGOs, relevant academic experts and governments, emerged in 2014. In light of that history, it is noteworthy that we have the former prime minister to Australia who also represents the Handa Foundation. It escapes none of us that we live in challenging times. Transforming challenges into opportunities relies on individual initiatives. Right now, the pandemic has us meeting in front of computer screens instead of meeting face-to-face. If we had been able to meet in Riyadh, this would have been a truly historic event. Our host had agreed to open its doors to the most diverse religious event in their history. The pandemic has blocked this. But we should work to some future day when the bridges that this invitation sought to start can be built. The challenges that keep us apart extend to other ways. I am grateful to KAICIID for arranging the technology that has enabled this meeting to be possible. There is something symbolic about this technological effort. As we reflect upon this, I hope we can also reflect on how to help other voices to do that with more than parallel monologues. Beyond the COVID pandemic, we suffer from larger problems deserving larger solutions as specified by the UN SDGs. We have vulnerable children spending their entire childhood in refugee camps, human trafficking, environmental problems and other challenges that we will be discussing. While the SDGs are framed in secular terms, many cannot be achieved without involvement by religious actors. The G20 Interfaith Forum provides a platform to provide inputs that can be provided by religious voices. We appreciate recommendations that this process be formalized. We are not under the illusion that in the past all relationships were perfect and just. We need to start with humility and find ways of seeking unity and solidarity. One of the challenges is that religious groups are not a model of unity. Yet, religious communities are getting better at coming together in achieving common ends in achieving their highest ends. In these challenging times I hope we can listen to each other's invitations, translate each other's actions and despite our shortcomings find ways to achieve these projects, friend by friend.

**H.E. Dr. Mohammad Al-Issa** after offering prayers, blessings and welcomes, said he was delighted to participate at the 2020 Forum being responsible for the Muslim World League and president of Muslim scholars. It is important to emphasize through this Forum that we, in the Muslim world, or in the rest of the world shared with brothers and sisters, emphasize that we have predominantly moderate voices that advocate for everyone. We reject hatred, racism and discrimination. These are the voices that represent our disposition that emphasizes human values. The problem of extremism does not come from religious texts, scholars or thinkers or lessons from history. The problem is protecting the interpretations from distortions and protecting the wonderful meanings from being misinterpreted. Our world is in dire need of respect. This can only be achieved if we protect our common values and reject the hatred. We must affirm that civilization lives in real materialistic gains matched in civilization leaps in moral values. Otherwise, the outcomes pose a threat. Peacemaking does not involve slogans. Peace efforts must comprise tangible outcomes that enhance security, strength and fraternal bonds. We must promote peace that solidifies human principles. In August 2019, I went to Sri Lanka to address the hatred which threatened to escalate. After dialogue everyone came together as one and children erupted in celebration surrounded by diversity in an historic festival. The human instinct



at its core is honest and innocent. We have an Islamic moral duty to create a safe and alert society. Acts are more sustainable when carried out collectively. The first document that embodies the spirit of cooperation signed by prominent religious leaders was signed in Paris in 2019.<sup>9</sup> We launched these initiatives to confront marginalization with soft power to confront hate. We have also confronted the insidious groups to marginalize women in society also. Criminal acts of human trafficking exploiting the circumstances of women and children is a major threat to the stability of human life. We have provided food and medication to those in poverty without distinction or discrimination. We work together with leaders in dialogue with parliamentary leaders to criminalize hatred. We have improved efficiency of education and enhancing the role of the family to teach those values. I see it as my obligation to extend my heartfelt thanks that under the umbrella of the Muslim World League and Muslim scholars to extend my gratitude to The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and others. May Allah protect them to consolidate the moderate values. These efforts took shape in a series of historic actions that are a source of inspiration for the entire world. The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia has a platform to confront extremist ideology. Since the Medina Charter took place in Mecca, we have issued the Charter of Makkah which is backed by 200 scholars and 4000 thinkers.<sup>10</sup> This is unprecedented in Islamic history. The charter was unprecedented. Best of success with the event.

**Rev. Kosho Niwano** said that the global issues require efforts now more than ever to be reflected in policy making to create a peaceful world. COVID impacted economies and lifestyles but also spirituality for many people. We offer our prayers but are also called to act on those whose minds have been filled with anxiety and intolerance. Even if the pandemic is brought under control, the world has other diseases that affect people's minds such as betrayal, distrust, and hatred. We need to stop the infection. COVID is affecting all areas of the world. The base of the Buddha's teaching is that all things are devoid of selves. I need to realize I exist that I am sustained by everything around me. Let me think where the bananas I ate this morning came from. They may have been harvested by a boy who harvested them. As I reflect, I begin to see the poverty surrounding the boy. When I eat the bananas, the contradictions that are a part of the world have become part of me. How much the world would change if world leaders would see how we are all connected as stakeholders. While the G20 meets to protect the economies and the pursuit of profit, we need to edit the world context based on religious values. Ryoanji Temple in Kyoto Japan is famous for its stone garden with a handwashing pot. On the pot is carved "I only know satisfaction." It is original satisfaction that is always present amid pleasure and pain. Nothing can make us happy without a satisfied heart and mind. Material blessings cannot make us happy if our hearts and minds are not satisfied on this deeper level. We Buddhists have a principle of devoting ourselves to the happiness of other people and putting them first. My grandfather, who was one of the founders of Religions for Peace, said, "When making plans for the following year, we must also make a plan for developing other religious communities and other people." If we were to adopt this approach, it would represent a major shift in values. Until today we have been able to live thanks to the natural resources we have received. But now that they are reaching limits, we face challenges such as climate change and violent conflicts. It is no longer enough to approach issues from perspective of solving problems. We must accept this as a chance to shift our values. But they will not gain support unless they match scientific knowledge. Finally, I mention the Little Bags of Dreams Campaign that we have been promoting since 1994.<sup>11</sup> We send them to children in conflict regions. I also helped my four children make bags.

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<sup>9</sup> See <https://www.thenational.ae/world/europe/world-s-religious-leaders-urge-co-operation-to-fight-against-prejudice-1.911469>

<sup>10</sup> See <https://islamicvoice.com/front-page/charter-of-makkah-a-blueprint-for-global-harmony/>

<sup>11</sup> See <https://rk-world.org/cultural-projects-and-philanthropy/little-bags-of-dreams-campaign/>

In 2010, I went to Mindanao with my daughter to present the bags to the children. We learned about the problems they face. They are from different cultures and religions. We fill the bags showing messages of solidarity to children they have never met. Although this is a modest program, children from Japan feel bonds to children in other locations who live in the same world but in hard conditions. Visiting or meeting with them could support a deep sense of connectivity for the entire world.

**H.E. Sheikh Abdallah Bin Bayyah** began with prayers, acknowledgements, welcomes and gratitude to participating people and groups. We participate in this Forum to raise awareness and achieve sustainability and peace. I come from the world of theories, to peoples, to religions and principles and the values of partnership and coexistence and not competition. This is the vision of our kingdom and its wise guidelines as a capital of coexistence and tolerance in the Emirates. With the partnership of the Muslim World League, we held a big conference for tackling the COVID pandemic with a joint statement and our efforts to deal with the other experts and eminencies. Working with experts, we paid attention to reconciliation between conflicted parties to be a bridge to present people with hope and the basics of life. We want religion to be part of the solution and not the problem. Religion is a great power that can be a bridge for outreach to communication and a bridge between people. I would love to see religions of the world as fire brigades to put out fires wherever they arise. As firemen and women they don't ask how the fire broke out, but ask, 'how can we put it out and prevent it?' We live in an unprecedented crisis in history which tests our beliefs and values and dealings with our family and neighbors and friends. It tests our values and ability to be resilient and to have patience and also it tests our sense of responsibility acting against forms of inequality to challenge or tackle this crisis and overcome it which is an existential challenge that we need to come to the light and to understand that by believing in God and His engulfing mercy that we can find a way to achieve a better world to bring to light a better world where there is coexistence and cooperation. This crisis can be a lesson learned and consequences learned to draw from in the future the religious and spiritual leaders are called upon to find more ways of communication and cooperation and ways to convene the spirit of fraternity and humanity in order to find a bright future of humanity in which we find ways to partner to have patience with everybody and ethics. I want to thank all partners for inviting me to participate and I want to call for all efforts to find common ground. I call on all people of good will to united to preserve this beacon of hope for all of humanity. Thank you, peace and prayers.

**His All Holiness Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew** said that we wish you blessings for the start of this years' G20 Interfaith Forum being broadcasted from Riyadh. We appreciate the efforts of the The Kingdom of Saudi Arabian authorities to provide an open space for interreligious and intercultural dialogue to host this distinguished online gathering. The G20 Interfaith Forum represents an extraordinary opportunity for political leaders to consider policy initiatives at the global level to draw on the world's largest economies. It has been our privilege to greet you at previous forums and we congratulate the Forum for gathering such an extraordinary group of religious and governmental leaders. We are pleased to see the topics that are being addressed. We only wish we could have been there physically. Knowing and appreciating the generosity of The Kingdom of Saudi Arabian hosts who really wanted us to participate. Unfortunately our situation is different this year than ever before because of the COVID pandemic. The year 2020 has been a challenging period for many people due to the coronavirus disease. We are very sad that many people have died. This new situation has widened the gap between rich and poor, has complicated health care services, and has complicated access to the basic necessities of food, water and shelter. The situation of asylum seeker, refugees have suffered many tribulations. As the Bible says, if one part suffers, every part

suffers with it. If one part is honored, every part rejoices with it. We continue to call for true solidarity. Public words need to change to deeds. The biblical story of the Good Samaritan involves the protection of human dignity reflected in our nature as beings created in the image and likeness of God. We would like to remind everyone attending the situation that human dignity does not have color, gender, age, ethnicity, gender or religion. Everyone has equal treatment of human persons. It must be provided at every time and place. This year we have been witnessing the rise of the Black Lives Matter movement. We stand with people of color all over the world with their God given infinite worth which cannot be reduced to market value. To put it in the words of a famous philosopher, ‘what has a price can be replaced; what is beyond price has dignity.’ We want to use this opportunity to raise our voice against structural inequalities and any form of racism, tribalism, or classism. The policy makers need to know that we call for zero tolerance of injustice and any other form of discriminatory practice. We wish to express our satisfaction in seeing that the organizers have decided to address religious and cultural heritage. Sacred sites are closely tied to our religious identity and piety. Unfortunately, we have experienced that such treasured places can become weapons of spreading intolerance. We want to use them to build bridges and confidence. Sensitization of consciousness – we launch concrete action level. We urge those participating to support the *United Nations Plan of Action to Safeguard Religious Sites*.<sup>12</sup> We also encourage drafting of policy recommendations that highlight interdependence of protection of religious and cultural heritage and enhancement of mutual understanding and respect. All these diminish the possibility of a dangerous clash of civilizations and eliminate unjustifiable suspicions of people of different cultural or religious backgrounds to continue on the journal toward justice, peace and solidarity. We are aware that there is complexity in administering sacred sites in nonconflictual ways, but we strongly believe that our religious monuments can be vital starting points for honest dialogue. They provide places where people can come together in fruitful ways. It is significant if you can come up with good policy recommendations that can be beneficial for the G20 to enhance environmental quality and enhance sustainable cultural heritage worldwide. We wish you productive deliberations and inspiring outcomes. You will be addressing issues of tremendous consequences for our lives together, humankind and its spiritual values. We wish you every success.

**His Eminence Cardinal Miguel Ángel Ayuso Guixot** talked about how the world is passing through a dark moment that requires solutions to the problems of our existential lives. There is a real necessity for the human family to come together with a unified spirit and a real friendship to propose answers to our common problems. We as religious leaders need to be a contagion of hope. Let us witness to our religious communities as well as our societies – unity, solidarity, and fraternity for bettering our common home as Pope Francis is continually reminding us. This is our public responsibility - be it political or spiritual. What Pope Francis has proposed to us all is essential if we really want to find an adequate therapy for ending this world crisis and preventing another one in the future. With this in mind, I pledge for our consideration Pope Francis’ call to reaffirm that we are members of one human family. Today we have an opportunity to draw upon the richness of what the Pope is offering not just to Catholics but to all of humanity. I invite you to join what the Pope is offering to work together to overcome the challenges humanity is facing. Religious leaders can support and encourage peoples around the world in the responsibility to seek only the dignity of every human person. Pope Francis says that the effort to seek God with a sincere heart is never self-serving. Pope Francis aims to help us recognize one another as traveling companions. Respect and friendship are fundamental attitudes needed for dialogue, and Pope Francis has created a place where people of good will may see efforts in promotion of common good but a needed hope in the future. Let us not forget that believers of different

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<sup>12</sup> See <https://www.unaoc.org/resource/unity-nations-plan-of-action-to-safeguard-religious-sites/>

religious traditions can offer their own valuable contributions from the society where they live. It is wrong when the only voices heard in public debate are those of the powerful and experts. Room needs to be made for reflections born of religious traditions of centuries of wisdom. Fraternity should not be limited only to those who share the same tradition. We are called to participate in a healthy subsidiary which starts from the individual and expands to the family all the way to the international community. As Pope Francis reminds us, it is necessary to develop a spirituality of fraternity but also a more efficient world organization to help solve pressing problems if fraternity is to be present in international relations. In a world characterized by indifference and greed for only select groups, there is a need for a new dialogue based on fraternity. Interreligious dialogue has an essential function in building a civil society that includes everyone and rejects the throwaway culture that leaves people isolated and without resources. I am hopeful that through this Forum a better world will emerge. May we remain connected in this joint responsibility and may we be true messengers of solidarity and fraternity.

**H.E. Anthony Abbott** spoke as a friend and associate with Handa who sponsored meetings last year as well as former prime minister of Australia. We have avoided the worst consequences but have had an economic retraction (10%). This pandemic is a serious health problem like the Asian Flu. The government ordered restrictions. The health problem is being addressed with treatment and it may be further ameliorated with a vaccine. The economic crisis is addressed through massive spending but it will leave a massive debt burden which will last for decades to come. I do not believe governments overreacted at the start, but I do agree with Dr. Navarro at WHO that lockdowns should be a short term measure while the disease was assessed and systems prepared. Now governments' best role is to assure that health systems can cope and the most vulnerable are protected but let individuals decide what risks they are prepared to run. The lockdowns also have impacts on mental health. The main economic burden has fallen on poorly paid persons in private sectors and their families. The quicker they return the better off the vulnerable will be. What do religious leaders bring to this issue? A sense of perspective. We are all mortal and sooner or later all of our lives will end. Second, freedom from fear. For people of faith, death is not the end – it is merely a transition. Third, a willingness to put ourselves out there because the purpose of life is to give glory to God and be our best selves. One of the most distressing things has been the closing of places of worship just when we need faith. People of faith should never let a virus dominate our lives because there will be another pandemic. If we respond with rules at odds with instinct to seek each other out, it will be not only a debt burden but a pall of despondency that we will struggle to shake off. People of faith should strive to see that policies are not ordered. Do unto others as you would have them do unto you. This should not change just because we are in the midst of a pandemic. I bring greetings from Dr. Handa. I hope that fear of a virus will never again prevent a Forum like this meeting in person so we can best learn from each other. Let's meet in person next year.

**H.E. Grand Mufit Dr. Shawki Ibrahim Allam** said that this Forum is framed within the broad framework of SDGs and world events. The reason for this is that the entire world has become a small village. Everything that happens breaks barriers and impacts even the remotest parts of the world. The COVID pandemic may be the greatest testament to this phenomena. This presents shared challenges that require us to open channels of dialogue that does not turn into unilateral concern to eliminate the opposition but encourages understanding. God created us of nations and tribes so that we may know each other. This diversity and polarity was not created in vain. God created them with difference – male and female and tribes – that you may know each other. God is all knowing and acquainted. There is no doubt there are disagreements about religions, but it is by virtual of morals that we coexist according to sublime meanings of mutual respect and virtue. Peaceful coexistence incorporates learning about different cultures. Moral values surface in

regards to differences. Abuse of the acknowledged moral code can lead to dire consequences. We need to turn them into tangible realities in these times. Frames of hatred and sectarianism and terrorism and attacks on human dignity creates great need to consolidate communication. We can develop initiatives to eliminate hate and restore peace. We are in need of media that promotes peace and not hatred. Educational systems need to achieve complementarity and harmony in spite of differences. We are in dire need of institutions to promote harmony. We have undertaken the responsibility of promoting the true values of Islam. We are in dire need of our institutions promoting peace, love and dialogue in word and deed. As mentioned before, Islamic law makes it our responsibility to offer the world with a better understanding. Egypt has established the secretariat of Fatwah to engage in dialogue and bring muftis together in support of peace and rejection of hatred. We are working to translate these conferences. These initiatives serve this noble purpose. The observatory for monitoring extremist seeks to monitoring hate against Islam and Muslims worldwide. The global fatwah index monitors results. Alongside these indicatives we need support of educational platforms. It is important that every society apply the outcomes of these initiatives. Thank you, blessings and prayers were offered.

**Dr. Kezevino Aram** said that we have been hearing different perspectives of what the pandemic has brought us as well as what this Forum represents. 200 days ago, the public health crisis was announced. It has been accompanied by an economic crisis and a gender crisis. Women have been on the receiving end of violence, burdened by caring. In the midst of this we have a call for solidarity which emanates from a deep and ancient wisdom that our faith brings us – that we are interconnected and that our actions have direct consequences. Colleagues spoke about this. In the Hindu tradition we also speak about the value of humans – to be in harmony and at the forefront of caring for the entire creation. This value of nonviolence was presented by Mahatma Gandhi in a political space at a time when the people of India wanted to look at a future that was different from the past. I want to talk about the importance of values for reimagining a future that is different from the past. I was part of the Asian consultation organized by KAICIID. I was reminded about the importance of religions bringing voices of the marginalized to the government structures and the values and experiences of people at the ground level. As leaders of humanity, how can we draw upon our experience to inform collective practice. The G20 Interfaith Forum reflects this remarkable collaboration. In the midst of the pandemic, thank you to our partners for helping us to build back better. How can we build a community that is cohesive coming together not only when there is an external threat, but in relation to how we live our lives where there is justice? I too wish we could have met in person, yet the technology has given us an opportunity to continue this dialogue. Over the next five days, may the conversations help us to address the global agenda. The challenges that face us are greater than even the greatest nations are able to combat. It is time to collaborate together. It is my honor to be with you and I hope the deliberations over the next five days where the roads from Riyadh will help us see where the fruits of this dialogue help us to think together and work together so that collective solidarity is a real possibility for the future.

**Chief Rabbi Pinchas Goldschmidt** believes that our century can be described as a religious century where the last one was mainly secular movements. Now religious leaders have a lot of influence over what is happening in the world today. Under the umbrella of KAICIID we created the Muslim Council of Europe which fights against Islamophobia and secures the rights of Muslims. Not since WWII has the world seen such a predicament. The world is suffering from economic downturn. There is a lot of discontent and hate in the street. The structures of many states have been weakened, with rising hate all over the world. This has been exacerbated by uncontrolled social media supporting hate spread across the world. Hate in the US was live streamed on social media. We are working to stop this free platform that permits anti-Semitism.

We convey our support on the Jewish side to Pope Francis signing the accords in the United Arab Emirates and the new Encyclical letter Fratelli Tutti that was issued by Pope Francis on the Fraternity and Social Friendship. This is in the spirit of the Bible which has been the inspiration to the three Abrahamic traditions. We have begun a new reading starting with the first recorded murder and religious war between Cain and Abel. We live in a world throughout history of conflicts and wars between different faiths and religions. We are happy to see this initiative where religions are working together as agents of peace and not agents of hate. We are seeing a rise of infringement of freedom of faith against Jewish and Muslim communities. We are working together with all people of faith and people of no faith to maintain the foundations which Europe after WWII said that human rights should be maintained. Without that there is no future for the European project. This last peace initiative which affected the gulf region, Israel and United Arab Emirates – the Abrahamic Accords Declaration<sup>13</sup> - was only plausible because of the dialogue between religions which made this accord even possible. May all the Gulf nations work together towards peace during these public health and economically difficult times. My friend Dr. Assah visited Auschwitz in recognition of our difficult past and then we met afterwards. We worked together to stop holocaust denial. A few days ago, Mark Zuckerberg agreed to not allow holocaust denial to be part of their platform.<sup>14</sup> We will work together with social media platforms to make the world a place where religious hatred is not permitted.

**H.E. Dr. Yousef bin Ahmed Al-Othaimen** offered greetings and spoke about how the special circumstances of the meeting dictates addressing the pandemic. The Organisation of Islamic Cooperation Charter talks about the importance of dealing with the challenges of working together with the contributions of religious leaders and institutions to bring together the opinions of people to allow tolerance and solidarity to prevail. We stand on a threshold which lets us look into steadfastness and measure our cooperation to measure our solidarity in this special situation to relieve the destructive results and impacts of the pandemic and allow the most vulnerable state to remain steadfast and recover. A seminar on medical aspects of the pandemic as well as religious perspectives was convened. It gave important recommendations in regard to necessities to our religion and jurisprudence of calamities which shows us the way to address the pandemic.<sup>15</sup> COVID has damaged the lives of millions of people. Many people have to deal with negative economic, political, social and cultural impacts from the pandemic. The pandemic is a source of threat to all of humankind. We need to look into our religious, cultural and ethnic bonds. No one is safe until everyone is safe. The OIC works with all its bodies to study the Muslim communities in non-member countries to look into the activities of extremist right wing groups and their activities that promote hate. The secretariat takes necessary measures to stand against these extremist parts. We have a responsibility to act according to this for society. The feelings of hate or discrimination related to the pandemic, we see foreigners and asylum seekers living in a country being attacked by right wing groups. They are badly treated. We need to state quite clearly that these groups spread the disease and lead to tension and division. I hope that we would be able to agree on a statement. We need to stand united to form a united front to revive the hope in the most marginalized in order to combat all those racist discriminatory and hateful seeds that are distributed to create a safe harbour. Thank you.

**H.E. Dr. Amina J. Mohammed** said that this Forum brings together such an impressive array of religious leaders. Thanks were offered. I recognize your efforts to advance SDGs and welcome your focus on collaboration. The pandemic is stretching us all. Inequalities are growing,

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<sup>13</sup> See <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefings-statements/the-abraham-accords-declaration/>

<sup>14</sup> See <https://www.cbsnews.com/news/facebook-bans-holocaust-denial-platforms/>

<sup>15</sup> See [https://www.oic-oci.org/topic/?t\\_id=23480&t\\_ref=13985&lan=en](https://www.oic-oci.org/topic/?t_id=23480&t_ref=13985&lan=en)

divisions are widening, climate change is not on pause, and we see ever rising assaults on human rights around the world –rising xenophobia, islamophobia, etc. *The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development* offers a blueprint for people and planet. It tackles impacts but realizing the agenda takes commitment and courage. It takes understanding that in order to solve big challenges, we need to come together. All of us need to understand this. Values of inclusion, social justice and leaving no one behind. I draw strength from the Prophet Mohammed. Showing love among themselves, being kind, if anyone is not well, then the whole body is not well. The COVID pandemic has demonstrated our interconnections but also our fragility. Thank you for coming together to heal. I also thank religious leaders for supporting the Secretary General’s appeal for a global cease fire. I encourage you to utilize this form to leverage strength of unity in diversity. In shaping hearts and minds you are also shaping a world that is more inclusive and sustainable for all. The United Nations stands with you.

**Prof. Mohammed Abu-Nimer** reviewed and highlighted the primary issues built into the program. We hope to contribute to create an ongoing sustainable space to convene policy makers and religious stakeholders. We agree that every session has policy makers as well as religious stakeholders. There are four plenaries in addition to the opening one. They focus on COVID 19, empowerment of women and youth and vulnerable communities, and religious action to address climate change and commitments of faith networks to disaster reduction. Each panel is followed by parallel sessions. The reason we have chosen these topics is not random. There are so many challenges facing religious communities. The magnitude and scope can be overwhelming. You will hear about this in relation to COVID, climate change, etc. as we all know, it is impossible to cover all themes in one conference. The agenda has been shaped by the host country however this year we added COVID-19 because of the crisis. We don’t expect to address everything in this conversation. We want to shed the light on religious concerns policy makers should take into consideration. We think that certain subthemes should be taken into consideration such as human rights and empowerment of vulnerable people. Virtual formats have imposed certain restrictions. Our aim is to generate strong energy, to build on previous work accomplished by past forums. This is not an attempt to reinvent the wheel. What is discussed is aimed at accumulating further knowledge and experience to enhance the intersectionality of policy makers and religious leaders. Another guiding principle in framing the agenda is that neither religious leaders or policy makers can solve these issues on their own. They are complementary and collaborative with specific concrete and doable recommendations. We cannot claim complete balance but we tried to take diversity into consideration when preparing the program. Our regional meetings related to this as well. As partners we recognize that this dialogue is based on principles to ensure participation. I am sure these dialogical principles will be further elaborated upon in the sessions. We hope to create recommendations that will be communicated in a number of ways. Each session has a timekeeper, rapporteur and moderator. We encourage you to be creative and think out of the box. We need the positive energy and stamina to engage with these complex issues. Our task and challenges are enormous. Humanity is going through waves of pain. The space we try to create as an oasis of hope and inspiration. The poet Rumi once said, “Don’t be sad for God sends hope in the darkest moment. The heaviest rain comes from the darkest cloud.” I hope you will all join us for the next session. Be sure to refresh your webpage.

## PLENARY SESSIONS

### COVID-19

**Description:** As the world struggles with the COVID-19 pandemic, faith-based organizations and religious actors' rapid, yet informed, responses have been crucial to support the collective efforts. Reaching out in support of those in need, comforting those who are suffering, feeding those who are hungry, praying for those who are struggling, promoting good health practices together with health authorities, and advocating for help for the most vulnerable are some examples of such activity. At the same time, responding to hate speech, stigmatization, and the other negative dynamics that hinder interreligious relations and social cohesion in the time of a pandemic remains a crucial task in which religious actors have unique leverage. This plenary is dedicated to COVID-19 and the challenges it brings to interreligious relations and social cohesion, bearing in mind the role of religious and interreligious actors in responding to such challenges. Moderated by Ms. Kirsten Laursen Muth (CEO of the Joint Learning Initiative on Faith and Local Communities), the keynote speaker was H.E. Dr. Hassan Nadhem (Minister of Culture, Tourism and Antiquities, Iraq) followed by Dr. Mohammed Al-Abdulaali (Assistant Minister of Health and Spokesperson of the Ministry of Health, Kingdom of Saudi-Arabia),

Elder David A. Bednar (Quorum of Twelve Apostles of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints), Ms. Nihal Saad (Chief of Cabinet and Spokesperson for the High Representative at UNAOC), Rabbi David Saperstein (President of the World Union for Progressive Judaism), Ms. Alissa Wahid (National Director of Gusdurian Network of Indonesia; KAICIID Fellow), and Fr. Augusto Zampini Davies (Adjunct Secretary of the Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development of the Holy See).

#### **Presentations Overview:**

**H.E. Dr. Hassan Nadhem** COVID 19 created a new situation in the world. It led to quarantine, lockdowns which had great impact on institutions, economics and social life. We heard many recommendations from international organizations. This pandemic had many impacts. Not only on economics but also on politics and the social and cultural lives of people around the world. People were not able to look out for their own interests. Iraq was also affected. Governmental institutions had to look into solutions to find measures to deal with the pandemic and its impact on the people of Iraq. Apart from taking up measures to move forward to find new strategies and working plans and development plans for the future to help states deal with such challenges in the future, especially in Iraq, we were part of the states that suffered from the crises much more than other countries. The pandemic came to us and in spite of the many negative impacts of the pandemic, we are fortunate that coordination between governmental institutions led to us being able to deal with the impacts of the COVID 19 pandemic not only in the health sector but to be able to monitor the daily cases and take up measures to raise awareness through media to meet the threats and dangers. Not only through the media but also through social channels. We worked with institutions of different kinds. Let me stress the important role and sacrifices brought to us by the health sector – this army who suffered to provide the efforts and endeavors to win the battle against this pandemic. Apart from the human role, these 'persons in white' played, also religious institutions, organizations, NGOs worked together to deal with the impact and find recovery and provide relief for the suffering not only for those infected but also for those who lost their jobs. They were given assistance to be able to deal with this situation. The government



of Iraq. Culture is one of the sources for livelihood of people. It is a major right of citizens in peaceful and times of catastrophes. Satellite channels and social media were important platforms for spreading new ideas and programs and seminars that assisted in fostering the coordination and communication between people around the world to help people deal with this new situation. Raising awareness within governmental institutions having some problems at the beginning of the pandemic when people refused to abide by the quarantine, the government reached out to religious institutions to find the help and support. They supported us in putting masks in worship places and they supported the quarantine. These institutions succeeded in spreading quarantine and lockdown. The role of religious leaders helped in crisis and assisted people who were living in crisis. The media also played an important role during the pandemic. Please let me finalize my short intervention by pointing out the impact such pandemic has on governmental institutions. Ma7y peace be upon you and thank you very much.

**Ms. Kirsten Laursen Muth** thanked conference organizers who brought us together. Religion affects how we understand life and death, what we strive to achieve in our lives and how we understand health and development. How we interpret what is happening is more important than ever. Faith leaders have helped us address the widening gaps to fill numerous social protection and support gaps and expanded these efforts during the pandemic often the first and last responders. Many faith actors quickly adapted existing programs by pivoting to online methods. They built with their experience. Many struggled to maintain their programs given the impact of COVID. Mental health is an important result of the crisis. Digital divides have meant that some experience more isolation than others. We do not know yet how this will affect religious social capital. Networking with religious leaders is one way among others that people adapt to social change. Working with other networks has been especially important especially in patriarchal structures. Some churches have contested regulations or perpetuated misinformation. This has provoked tensions that have frayed relations with governmental authorities and damaged perceptions in the public. Faith organizations need to be at the table. Their grassroots connections and knowledge is important for vaccine hesitancy and other public health aspects that are critical to the response. After presentations, she asked each panelist to identify a recommendation to strengthen engagement in meaningful ways to deepen the relationship between groups. What would be one suggestion, example or recommendation that would advance the collaboration of religious engagement in responding to the pandemic with state actors?

**Dr. Mohammed Al-Abdulaali** This COVID-19 pandemic – let’s look a few months back and then take a glimpse into the future. Currently, trends are still high (lower left part of slide) even



as Saudi Arabia is trending down (see next slide). Most G20 countries are experiencing active upward trending. A few countries are experiencing downward trends. There is some variability



country by country. There are many countries experiencing COVID growth one week to another. The world is still experiencing active disease in every continent of the world. All humans are experiencing this pandemic and we will be dealing with it for some time. This is one of the dashboards that we are using in Saudi Arabia to monitor what is occurring to prevent the virus from being transmitted vastly among the people (see slide). The trends in Saudi Arabia are trending currently in the downward direction. Other countries have upward trends so everyone around the world needs to be cautious and proactively do what they can to prevent the spread. We need to work collaboratively. This is important for managing digital system utilization,



hospital coordination, healthcare investigations, etc. All of these services need to be managed and controlled appropriately. In Saudi Arabia, all of these services are provided to everyone without discrimination. Everyone has the same access to care and same management of services. We are now ranked 13<sup>th</sup> globally in terms of being the safest country to reside in during the COVID 19 pandemic (see slide). Healthcare is offered to everyone free of charge. *The Lancet*



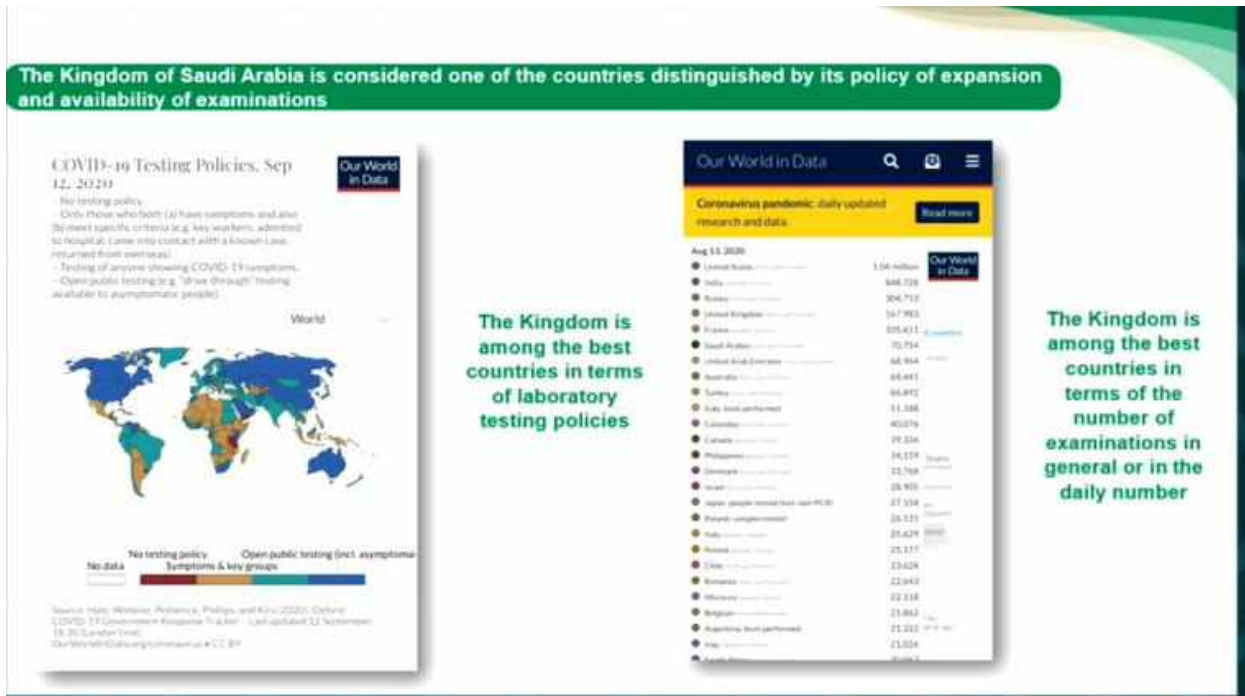
has praised Saudi Arabia's effort to combat COVID 19 (see slide). The article discussed our unlimited support to clinics, digital services, and free access for patients with symptoms to clinics as important factors in how we have responded to the virus. Saudi Arabia is considered

## The Lancet praises KSA effort to combat covid-19

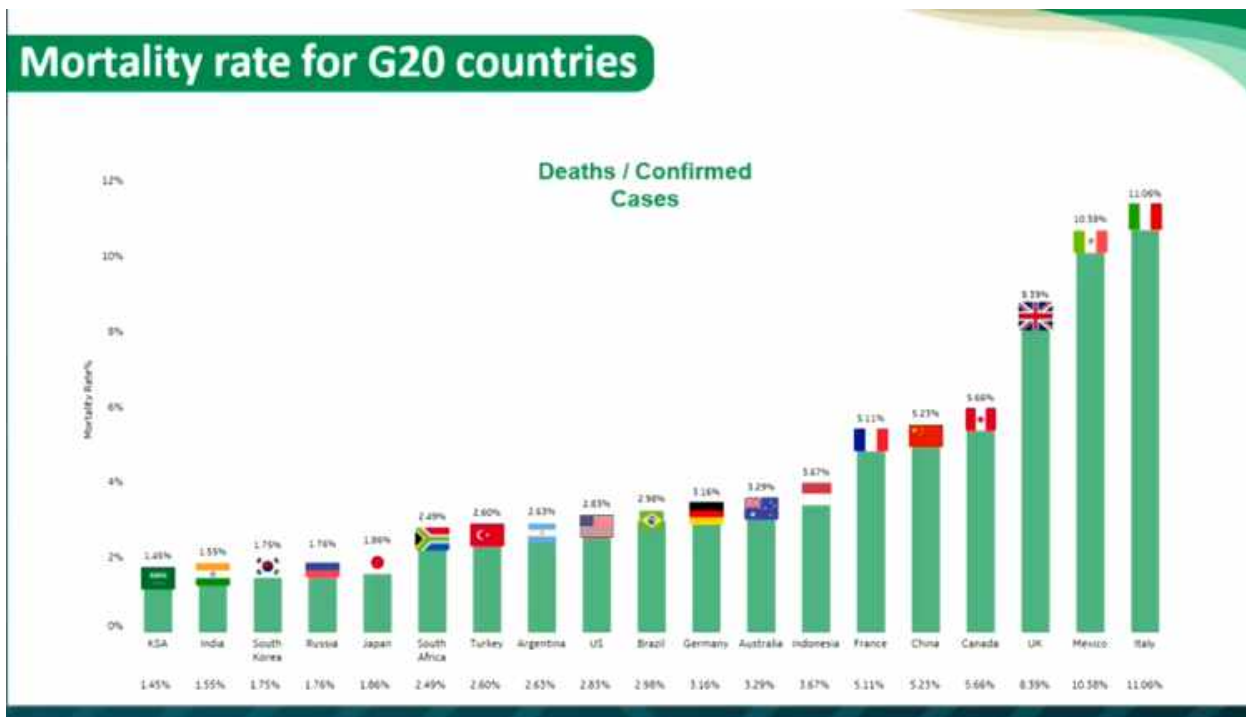


one of the countries distinguished by its policy of expansion and availability of examinations.

Saudi Arabia is among the best countries in terms of laboratory testing policies and in terms of the number of examinations in general or in the daily number (see slide).

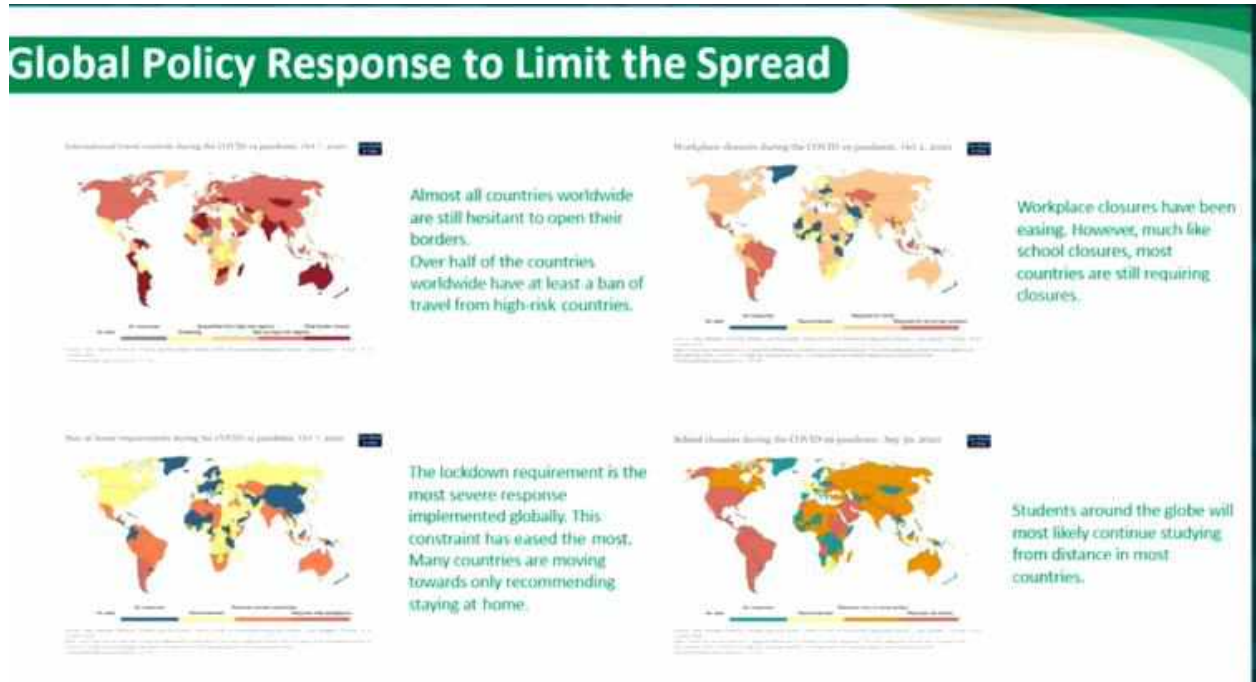


We have much lower mortality rates than other G20 countries (see slide). Before COVID, we

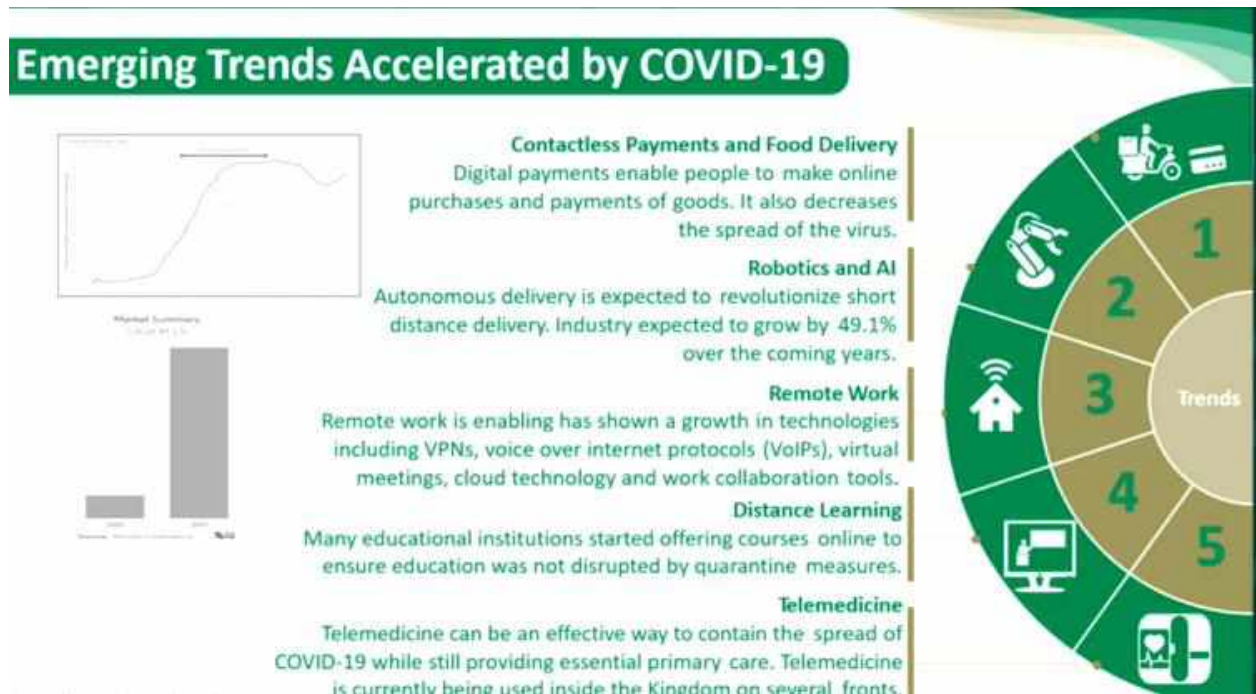


could travel without restrictions. Now, almost all countries worldwide are hesitant to open their borders. Over half of the countries worldwide have at least a ban of travel from high-risk countries. Workplace closures have been easing. However, much like school closures, most countries are still requiring closures. The lockdown requirement is the most severe response implemented globally. This constraint has also been the one that has been eased the most. Many countries are moving towards only recommending staying at home. Students around the globe

will most likely continue studying from distance in most countries. The world has changed and the impacts will likely last a long time (see slide).




There are several emerging trends that have been accelerated by COVID-19. Contactless payments and food delivery have increased. Digital payments enable people to make online purchases and payments of goods (see slide). Robotics and Artificial Intelligence is expected to



revolutionize short distance delivery. Remote work, distance learning and telemedicine have also rapidly increased in response to the COVID-19 pandemic.


A policy approach that emphasizes herd immunity would negatively affect the population, so we are praying and hoping that a vaccine will be developed within the next year (see slide).

## Immunization and Vaccination

 The pandemic will not come to an end until a sufficiently large portion of the world population is immune. This is known as "herd immunity threshold".

Immunity threshold can be achieved two ways:

1. As more and more people get infected, they will build immunity. Research indicates that this will take a long time and will involve a lot of deaths and a strain on our healthcare systems.
2. Providing immunity through the form of a vaccine. If enough people receive it, then we can reach that immunity threshold.


 With up to six vaccines currently in phase III of testing, there is hope that the race for a vaccine that for COVID-19 we will beat all previous records and get to a safe vaccine much faster than ever before.

Vaccine	Phase I	Phase II	Phase III	Approved
Moderna	24	0	1	1
Novartis	1	1	1	1
Novartis	2	0	1	0
Novartis	0	0	2	0
Novartis	0	0	0	0
Novartis	0	0	0	0
Novartis	0	0	0	0
Novartis	0	0	0	0
Novartis	0	0	0	0
Novartis	0	0	0	0

The London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine updates the tracker (above) weekly and shows the current stage of each development.

### Conclusion

- The development timeline of vaccines vary greatly. We are hoping to develop a vaccine faster than ever before to fight this pandemic.
- With six vaccines currently being tested on human subjects, it seems like we are close.
- However, this does not account for any mutations in the virus, which could then require their own vaccine in the future.




وزارة الصحة  
Ministry of Health

Availability of vaccines are nothing unless we make a way to provide accessibility widespread.


## Is it Possible to Eradicate COVID-19?

### Why is a Vaccine so Important?

- Humanity has eradicated infectious diseases before, but only few.
- It is possible to eradicate COVID, but not anytime soon or maybe unlikely.
- Since we lack any pharmaceutical or natural defense at this moment, it seems like we will have to share our planet with COVID for quite some time.

 **Avoid Rapid Outbreaks**

1. Detection
  - Detect patients are early as possible.
  - Limits the rate of infection.
2. Tracing
  - Positive patients being traced allows us to find "hubs" of infection to limit the spread.
3. Isolation
  - Isolate patients depending on their severity and continuously monitor.


 **Suppression and Mitigation**

**Mitigation Strategies**

- Mitigation strategies that slow but do not interrupt transmission. For example, social distancing.


Communication and awareness are important tools as we transition towards opening back up. The following mitigation strategies will be crucial for the foreseeable future:

- Hand Hygiene
- Masking Wearing
- Social Distancing

 **Treatment and Innovation**

Treatment has evolved inside and outside the clinical setting:

- Fever clinic and drive-through testing centers decrease rate of infection.
- Complete rehaul of ventilator supply chain and maintenance using predictive analysis. Keeping critical care units stocked and ready.
- Drive thought leadership and publishing 75+ papers on COVID research.
- Increase ICU capacity
- Digital health initiative



وزارة الصحة  
Ministry of Health

It is important to educate people about COVID and make all treatments available in ways that they can be accessed by everyone (see slide). All people at any time must have access to ensure the safety of the community. We have successfully addressed past tragedies and we improved and developed. We have the power, strength and willingness and capabilities to let everyone pass

through this tragic event toward a better life in the future. Umberto Eco said “History is a master because it teaches us that it doesn’t exist. It’s the permutations that matter.” If we compare this pandemic to the Spanish Flu, maybe now we have learned; with unified hearts we have what we need to address the crisis.

**Elder David A. Bednar** said he was grateful and honored to participate in the Forum in the face of confusion of the role religion plays in communal lives, this Forum is more important than ever. We may differ but we are united in promoting respect for people of faith. The COVID pandemic has emerged as the unavoidable overarching theme. Some of the most critical lessons religious voices have been learning is my role. Some government officials fail to understand how religion is fundamental to the lives of billions of people. Distinctions have been made between essential and nonessential then treated religion as nonessential. This misses how vital religion is to people’s lives. Government officials have a role to protect lives. I applaud this. Religious activities should be limited to keep people safe. No one has a right to spread a dangerous virus. But that is not the end of the matter. How officials understand religion deeply affects how they treat religious people in a time of crisis. The more deeply religion is understood the more effective policies can be. Part of the response arises from the failure of some policy makers to account for the centrality of faith in the lives of believers. For many, religion is the center of our lives and the core of our identity. Our faith calls us to love God above all else. It defines who we are and how we live, the source of strength, consolation, and hope amidst sorrow and death. Religion is the shaper of community life, creating and sustaining the ties that bind people together. Religion transmits moral truths to the next generation. Faith is essential to human dignity. This is why international law holds that religious freedom is non-derogable – it cannot be taken away even in times of emergency. To deny this freedom is to deny something essential to someone’s soul. Experts are documenting the rise of depression, physical and emotional abuse and tragedies during isolation and lockdown. Some have called for religious freedom attention as cavalier disregard for COVID public policy. That is not what responsible voices in the faith community seek. By acknowledging the essential place of religion in people’s lives, governments can win essential allies for health risks and other risks as well. Strong connections between family, deep religious beliefs have long been connected to better physical and mental health. My call is for respect, accommodation, and cooperation for creative solutions that mitigate COVID while not cutting people off from essential meaning in their lives. In many places, things have backfired. Choosing to disrespect religion rather than find ways to safely accommodate it has serious consequences. Infringement on dignity, harms communal interests, and diminishes trust in public health officials. Religion can be a powerful font of legitimacy and practical assistance. Many religious leaders have called on followers to sacrifice. Acknowledging those sacrifices and seeking better accommodation is the way forward. Misinformation is problematic. Faith leaders can provide accurate information. Religious leaders can be helpful for vaccine information. Powerful opportunities are only possible if officials acknowledge that religion is essential to their identity and being. It is my hope that faith leaders and government officials can collectively respond to protect physical and spiritual health. As I conclude I share these hopes in the name of Him whom I serve, love and represent, even Jesus Christ. Thank you. I think the Father was effective in highlighting the role religions play in healing. When we talk about the human, we talk about the whole person. If there is an appreciation for the whole human, religion plays a vital role in the totality of healing. That is a vital principle for everyone to understand.

**Ms. Nihal Saad** I want to compliment your input and approach to COVID-19, particularly from the religious perspective focusing on the role of religious leaders and faith based organizations. Since the covid pandemic has laid bare morbidities and brutal inequalities, we have been hearing

from all over the world and from world leaders at the UN we have been saying ‘we are all in this together.’ But as time passes, we have realized that there is no such thing as we are all in this together. Virtually maybe but in real life this is a myth. As the UN secretary general said, while we all float on the same sea, some are in yachts while others are clinging to the floating debris. Hate has affected lives of vulnerable communities including elderly, migrants, women and youth. It is especially appalling to see surge in hate speech, Islamophobia, racism, Christianophobia, xenophobia, etc. triggering a vicious circle of violence. We believe fragmentation of society is one of the most serious upheavals of COVID 19 with long term impact beyond the short term physical impact. The social upheavals are long term. There is always a reason to be optimistic however. We have seen a number recent resolutions that the UN General Assembly has adopted. In particular, I mention A/RES/74/307 *United response against global health threats: combating COVID-19* and A/RES/74/306 *Comprehensive and coordinated response to the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic*.<sup>16</sup> I would like to give you a brief summary of what the UN has been doing and what the UN Alliance of Civilizations has been doing with religious leaders. The UN system mobilized early and comprehensively on the global health response, establishing instruments for rapid response to the socioeconomic impacts and laid out a broad policy for response. They laid out logistics for countries that launched initiatives. It became clear that the pandemic was more than a health crisis. The socioeconomic, security, humanitarian, human rights crisis has affected us as individuals, families, communities and societies. The global response needs to reflect on the deep structures of societies and the ways countries cooperate will require a whole of government approach driven by compassion and solidarity. The UN three point plan emphasizes: 1) large scale comprehensive health responses guided by WHO, 2) wide ranging effort to safeguard livelihoods by addressing socioeconomic impacts 3) transformative response that leads to a better world by addressing underlying inequalities. In this context, the UN Alliance of Civilization has always believed in the role of faith based actors in being involved in the front lines. The vast majority of believers, as Elder Bednar noticed, have their own convictions and traditions. They share in common the commandment to embody the principle of leaving no one behind and values of social justice to support those that are hardest to reach. When Ebola broke out in Africa, faith leaders already had a track record of being on the front lines when things hit. Faith has been the anchor people turn to for consolation and hope. Many faith actors have mobilizing capacity and the trust of those they serve. Religious leaders also have a responsibility to dispel misinformation, address gender inequalities, including vulnerable populations including minorities, indigenous, people of disabilities and others by creating supportive environment and advocating for their rights and publicly standing against statements that encourage human rights violations and violence. The UN Alliance of Civilizations has broadened its outreach to faith actors since march. We have had a number of initiatives that we launched. We heeded the call of the UN Secretary General to support addressing challenges by promoting collaboration and the joint call to strengthen interfaith and intercultural dialogue. In our capacity as co-chairs of The Interagency Task Force on Religion, we issued a statement on April 18th that had the endorsement of members comprising the Interagency Task Force. It was also supported by members of the Multifaith Advisory Council.<sup>17</sup> In support of the document of human fraternity by Pope Francis and the Grand Imam, we co-organized a prayer for humanity on May 14<sup>th</sup> spearheaded by the Grand Imam, the UN Secretary General and Pope Francis.<sup>18</sup> Many other leaders joined in that initiative. Finally, I conclude by saying we have also convened a meeting

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<sup>16</sup> For more information, see <https://www.un.org/en/ga/74/resolutions.shtml>

<sup>17</sup> For more information, see <https://www.unaoc.org/2020/04/joint-statement-interagency-task-force-on-religion-and-sustainable-development/>

<sup>18</sup> See <https://www.focolare.org/en/news/2020/05/11/14th-may-2020-world-day-of-prayer-for-humanity/>



with more than 40 religious leaders from across the faith spectrum to come up with a *Global Plan of Action* which is results oriented. We are about to launch a number of actions related to that *Global Plan of Action* by the end of this year. We also have the *United Nations Plan of Action to Safeguard Religious Sites*<sup>19</sup> developed by the UN Alliance of Civilization and the Secretary General's *Appeal for Global Ceasefire*.<sup>20</sup> Despite both of these, we have seen some attacks on religious sites. We have issued statements condemning those attacks. My G20 recommendation is that we build trust with faith-based actors so that we can give them the appropriate space that they need to help and support their communities. Pope Francis elaborates on fraternity in the *Encyclical Fratelli tutti*. He said 'we must put human dignity back in the center and on that pillar build the structures that we need.'

**Rabbi David Saperstein** From Jewish history, some examples. Too often those affected seek to explain why catastrophes have affected them. Populations have often targeted minority groups despite them being ravaged. Often Jewish communities were blamed when in affected areas by pogroms and too rarely people rose to protect them. Today there are political upheavals and increase in hate speech and crimes. It resonates with us and I hope that interfaith communities will work together to address this. The spirit of Jewish legal rules that preference saving life unless they must be broken to provide healthcare during pandemics or that save innocents to guarantee all would be helped or that say medicines cannot be made more expensive because they're rare or needed more – the spirit of these laws speak to us in the midst of this pandemic. Religious communities do play a pivotal role in developed and developing countries. Religious communities play key role in providing on the ground care, stopping misinformation, providing reliable accurate information and they will be key partners when vaccines become available. The social service arms for religious communities are needed more than ever given the socioeconomic impacts of the pandemic. That is why it is encouraging the World Bank, UNICEF, and other alliances have reached out to strengthen cooperation with religious communities. I want to commend the Georgetown Berkley Center who has overseen this daily bullet on COVID-19. My own life's work running the public policy advocacy arm of the Reformed Jewish community in the U.S. has allowed me to see that in the U.S., and across the globe, so many faith denominations advocate for universal care and ensuring that minorities – the issue of racism – must be addressed globally and within our countries. All of these are disproportionately afflicted and underserved medically. Ensuring women are not left out of plans for recovery. This pandemic response needs to be seen through a gender lens. Women are too often exposed, disproportionately caregivers, increase in domestic violence, disproportionate number of girls forced out of school and often forced into child labor or child marriages. The epidemic recovery policies and social capital investments should fully include women. Women are integral to social stability and community. With regards to religious freedom issues, there is a balance that must be maintained. Precisely when illness and despair is high, important needs must be attended to. Health care should take a priority with religion as with any other institutions. The religious community is a unique ally in COVID efforts. Religions will play a vital role if governments will embrace them as key allies that they can be. The g20 can help make that potential a reality. structural racism/structural poverty – there is a G20 openness to seeing this which is rare. G20 recommendations: The religious community can be the lever to really help us come to grips with the structural issues. Second, if we ever get out of this, a vaccine must be accepted by a large percentage of the human race. Misinformation is high. The

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<sup>19</sup> See <https://www.unaoc.org/resource/united-nations-plan-of-action-to-safeguard-religious-sites/>

<sup>20</sup> See <https://www.un.org/sg/en/content/sg/statement/2020-03-23/secretary-generals-appeal-for-global-ceasefire>

religious community can plan ahead to work together to play a role to be the source of good information and wise guidance to our followers.

**Ms. Alissa Wahid** Thank you for the opportunity to share what we have learned in Indonesia. I will speak about interfaith initiatives in the time of pandemic. As in other disasters, the character of faith based organizations are such that they are usually the first responders (see slide).



Faith-based organizations (FBOs) are value-driven and communal. When a disaster strikes, a true calling of humanity would happen because it is a calling emanating from the values of religions. FBOs have close interactions between faith leaders and the congregation. This helps consolidate efforts (see slide). FBOs have massive organization and systematic structures to reach out at the grassroots level to enable them to reach unreachable people during disaster like the tsunamies in



2004 in Indonesia or now during the COVID pandemic. FBOs already offer healthcare services and maternal clinics, cooperatives etc at the grassroots level. This enables FBOs to swiftly respond during an emergency outbreak. This happened during the COVID pandemic in Indonesia. Here, FBOs are very influential. We set up an interfaith initiative involving two Muslim organizations with 80 million and 20 million members respectively, Catholic churches and Indigenous faith communities. We learned that an interfaith response helped resource fundraising across religious communities. Interfaith responses make it easier to collect data from most vulnerable people. An interfaith response made it easier to gather volunteers and access governments. Interfaith response can consolidate responses.<sup>21</sup> The interfaith responses created a strong message of solidarity and hope (see slide). We consolidated resources and programs making the outreach bigger than usual. We cared for the most vulnerable irregardless of social divide. We served those most marginalized reaching those most underserved. We also educated society that religions unite people - they do not divide. One of our leaders, Pres. Abdurrahman Wahid, who said that the true role of religion is to awaken humans to the fact that he/she is part of the human race and the universe. In Indonesia, the COVID pandemic has proven that.

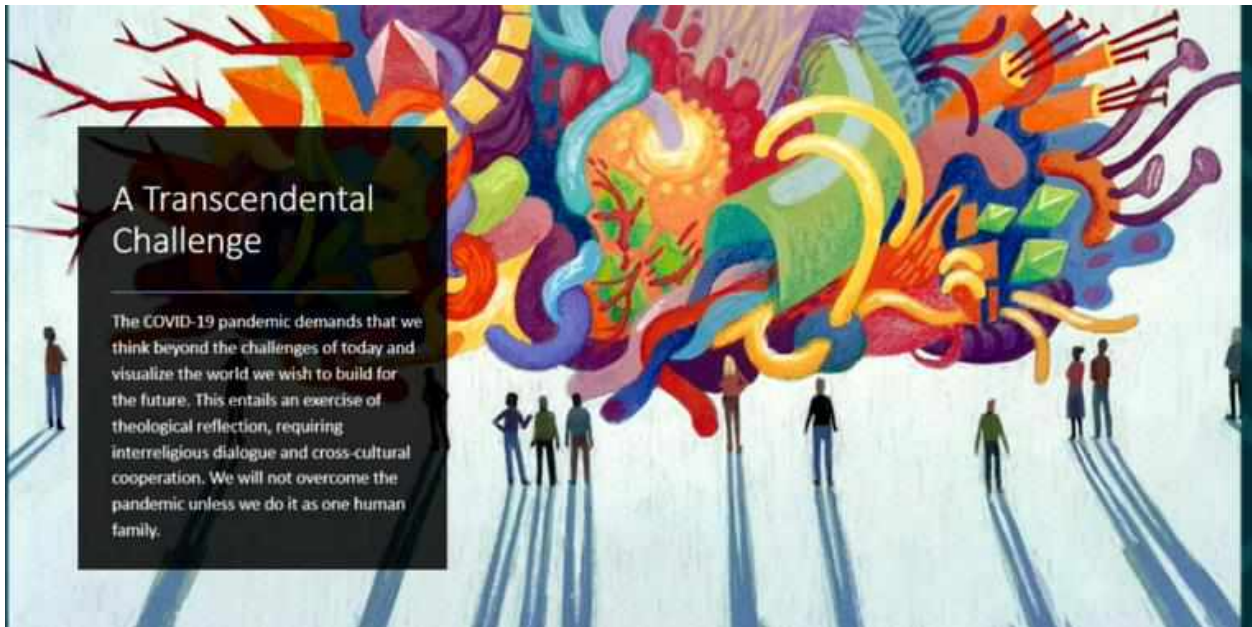


Religions have power. We have a teaching of three solidarities. A Muslim can only uphold Islam as a blessing to the universe if he also takes care of three solidarities: solidarity between Muslims, solidarity between cities and state, and solidarity across humanity. This pandemic has brought us together in this solidarity across humanity. Religions have a huge outreach. If the biggest religions on earth can unite then they have a voice to direct the future of the world to the betterment of humanity.

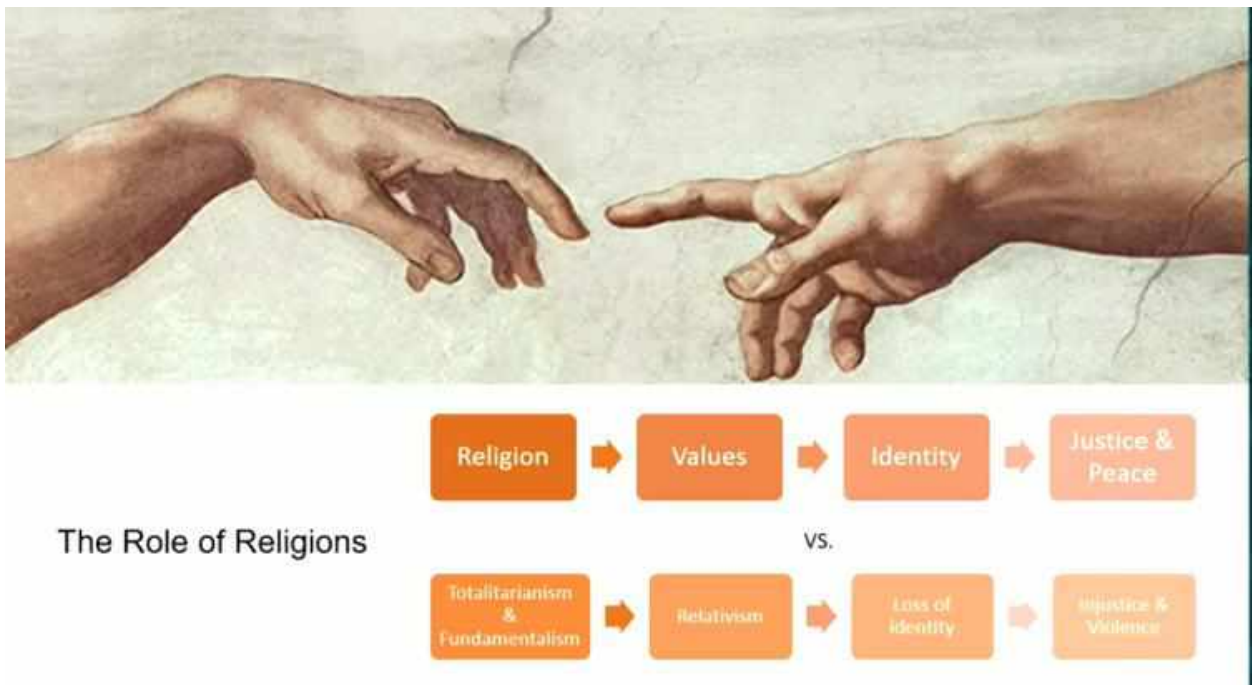
**Fr. Augusto Zampini Davies** At the beginning of the pandemic, Pope Francis called us from different departments at the Vatican and he said, ‘I want you to prepare for the future.’ The group said, ‘What do you mean? He said, ‘This is not just a matter of public health; the pandemic will cause big social problems. It could cause division and exacerbate other crisis that are

<sup>21</sup> For more information, see <https://reliefweb.int/report/indonesia/indonesia-faith-based-organizations-share-their-experience-responding-covid-19>

happening such as with economics and ecology. I want you to take this pandemic as an opportunity to prepare the future – not prepare for the future which implies that the future is set and we can only have survival of the fittest. Let’s prepare a future with knowledge and creativity combined with realism (see slide). Choose your partners quickly because this is the time. The



world will be different after the pandemic so start preparing for that now.’ That is why he developed an interministerial COVID-19 commission – the Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development.<sup>22</sup> The Dicastery addresses the pandemic, but also issues of food security, economic inequality, ecological problems, etc. (see slide). We work with FIO, EFAQ, hospitals around the world, and non-Catholic organizations on issues of economics, especially. We work



<sup>22</sup> For more information, see <http://www.humandevlopment.va/en/vatican-covid-19.html>

in an interdisciplinary way. COVID is a horrible thing, but we know within religious traditions that sometimes when in a crisis, we need to see further. We are trained to see that vision through theological training and interreligious communication. No one can get out alone we have to do this together to face a common problem together. This could be a terrible thing or a unique opportunity to promote a more inclusive and sustainable future. Religions can be a source of hostility, fundamentalism or war. This is a time for conversation to reconnect with yourself that we have a common home and we are all brothers and sisters and with creation and the planet. This cannot be done through hostility. It has to be through all the values of fraternity, compassion, care, friendship and cultural enrichment. This does not mean that we will necessarily will do it but it is possible. The values are important because one of the bigger viruses than corona, as explained in the Pope's *Encyclical Fratelli tutti*, is individualism. Individualism prevents us from being social beings. Individualism leads to relativism – my truth, my property, my culture, my cure, my vaccine, my territory – in tis insane. We live in a common home. If we do not have a common solution for a cure, it is worthless. If we do not share, it is unsustainable. Individualism is a virus and religion can help us cure it. Religions are well equipped to address this. All our religious traditions believe in community and a common space and a common time in history with a vision for the future. We can dialogue to create something new. What we can do now is this new pandemic connected with other crises and this has not happened before. We can bring something new to bring healthy institutions, highlighter communities, healthier people and a healthier planet. Thank you. Given that this is a G20 Interfaith, I would have lots of recommendations but I mention two. It is impossible to address a global pandemic without good global politics. Given the rise of nationalism, I would say that religions could bring together the voices of people coming together beyond borders like a human family and fraternity to have an accord for multilateral approaches to the pandemic. We cannot get out of the difficulty in isolation. When vaccines become available, a multilateral approach. Extremely indebted countries cannot get out of debt, we could ask for debt cancellation of very poor regions so that they can put that money into health, care and development otherwise the world will be more divided than ever.

## **THE EMPOWERMENT OF WOMEN, YOUTH AND VULNERABLE PEOPLE**

**Description:** This plenary focuses on the role and potential of religious actors and communities to contribute to the creation of structures which more effectively contribute to the empowerment of marginalised and vulnerable groups, particularly women and youth. It will also explore how religious communities are collaborating with political decision-makers to develop and implement policies that promote equality of opportunity, especially for underserved groups. Equal opportunities for all will allow for a thriving global society. However, persistent social and economic inequalities between men and women continue to shape the reality in education, economic independence, health provision and security. Religious communities and institutions are influential partners when it comes to shaping these areas and have, in some cases, a long history to draw upon. Moderated by Dr. Agnes Abuom (Moderator of the Central Committee of the World Council of Churches), the keynote address was given by H.E. Rev. Kjell Magne Bondevik (Former Prime Minister of Norway and Founder and Executive Chair of the Oslo Center), followed by Mr. Ahmad Alhendawi (Secretary-General of the World Organization of the Scout Movement), Dr. Hala Al-Tuwaijri (Secretary General of the Family Affairs Council, The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, and Head of the Women’s Empowerment Team at G20 Riyadh), Prof. Ursula Basset (Professor at Pontificia Universidad Católica, Argentina), Chief Rabbi Schlomo Hofmeister (Chief Rabbi of the Jewish Community in Vienna, Austria), Prof. Dr. Azza Karam (Secretary General of Religions for Peace), H.E. Mahmoud Mohieldin (UN Envoy for Financing for Development), H.E. Pramila Patten (Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict), and H.E. Dr. Aminata Touré (Former Prime Minister of Senegal).

### **Presentations Overview:**

**Dr. Agnes Abuom**

**H.E. Rev. Kjell Magne Bondevik**

**Mr. Ahmad Alhendawi**

**Dr. Hala Al-Tuwaijri**

**Prof. Ursula Basset**

**Chief Rabbi Schlomo Hofmeister**

**Prof. Dr. Azza Karam**

**H.E. Mahmoud Mohieldin**

**H.E. Pramila Patten**

**H.E. Dr. Aminata Touré**

**Discussion:**

**Key Points Made:**

**Recommended Points of Dialogue with the G20**

## **RELIGIOUS ACTION TO ADDRESS THREATS OF CLIMATE CHANGE**

**Description:** As climate change becomes more severe, it is increasingly seen as a moral and existential issue. Different faith groups around the world have strongly advocated in favour of tougher measures to safeguard the planet. They have entered into robust partnerships among and beyond religious communities to protect rainforests, conserve natural resources and safeguard ecosystems threatened by climate change. The problems of our planet and the consequences of climate change are not only problems of science and technology, they are also of moral, ethical and spiritual nature – about how we live our lives, use and distribute resources, and how much everyone is willing to contribute. This plenary session provides an insight into existing and new initiatives of religious actors in their response to climate change and the ways in which they can support policy makers to push forward the environmental agenda. Moderated by Ms. Bani Dugal (Chairperson of the UN Task Force on Engagement with Faith-based Organizations), keynote addresses were given by H.E. Abdulrahman Abdulmohsen A. AlFadley (Minister of Agriculture and Environment in The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia) and H.E. Aksel Jakobsen (State Secretary and Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs, Norway) followed by His Eminence Metropolitan Emmanuel Adamakis of France (Exarch of the Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople and member of KAICIID Board of Directors), Ms. Sadhvi Bhagawati Saraswati (Secretary-General of the Global Interfaith WASH Alliance), Dr. Juliette Biao Koudenoukpo (Regional Director for Africa at the UN Environment Programme), Rev. Fletcher Harper (Executive Director of GreenFaith), H.E. Margaritis Schinas (Vice-President in the European Commission with the portfolio of Promoting the European Way of Life), and Rabbi Awraham Soetendorp (President of Green Cross Netherlands).

### **Presentations Overview:**

**Ms. Bani Dugal**

**H.E. Abdulrahman Abdulmohsen A. AlFadley**

**H.E. Aksel Jakobsen**

**His Eminence Metropolitan Emmanuel Adamakis of France**

**Ms. Sadhvi Bhagawati Saraswati**

**Dr. Juliette Biao Koudenoukpo**

**Rev. Fletcher Harper**

**H.E. Margaritis Schinas**

**Rabbi Awraham Soetendorp**

### **Discussion:**

### **Key Points Made:**

### **Recommended Points for G20 Dialogue:**

## **THE COMMITMENT OF FAITH NETWORKS TO DISASTER RISK REDUCTION**

**Description:** Religious communities and leaders are essential and influential responders when their communities face upheaval and natural disasters, including health crises such as the COVID-19 pandemic. With their moral authority and familiarity with their communities, they are able to provide early warnings, alleviate human suffering, build up resilience and provide leadership when it comes to making important changes to people's behaviour and attitudes. In 2020, religious actors have played an important role in preserving human dignity, raising morale and building practical partnerships with local authorities to effectively address the COVID-19 pandemic. This plenary will reflect on the needs and achievements of religious actors in disaster response and advancing the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). It will also explore the partnerships within and among faith networks as well as with policy makers on every level which support and empower them to act most effectively. Moderated by H.E. Dr. Thoraya Ahmed Obaid (Former member of the Shura Council, The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia; former Executive Director of the United Nations Population Fund; former United Nations Under-Secretary General), speakers were Dr. Amal Al Habdan (Vice-Rector for Academic Support & Student Services at Princess Nourah Bint Abdulrahman University; Consultant at King Salman Humanitarian Relief Center, The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia), Sister Sharon Eubank (LDS Charities and Relief Society Presidency of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints), H.E. Dr. Bandar M. H. Hajjar (President of the Islamic Development Bank Group), Mr. Andrew Morley (President and CEO of World Vision International), The Rt. Hon. Baroness Emma Nicholson of Winterbourne (House of Lords, United Kingdom), and Mr. Fadlullah Wilmot (Regional Program Manager for the Middle East and Africa, Muslim Aid).

### **Presentations Overview:**

**H.E. Dr. Thoraya Ahmed Obaid**

**Dr. Amal Al Habdan**

**Sister Sharon Eubank**

**H.E. Dr. Bandar M. H. Hajjar**

**Mr. Andrew Morley**

**The Rt. Hon. Baroness Emma Nicholson of Winterbourne**

**Mr. Fadlullah Wilmot**

### **Discussion:**

### **Key Points Made:**

### **Recommended Points for G20 Dialogue:**



## **THE WAY FORWARD**

**Description:** This session focused on how to collaboratively work together in light of the prior dialogue. Moderated by Prof. Mohammed Abu-Nimer (Senior Advisor, KAICIID), speakers were H.E. Faisal bin Muaammar (Secretary General, KAICIID), Dr. Abdullah Alhomaïd (Secretary General, National Committee for Interfaith and Intercultural Dialogue, The Kingdom of The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia), H.E. Cardinal Matteo Zuppi (Archbishop of Bologna, Italy), and Prof. Alberto Melloni (Professor and UNESCO Chair in Religious Pluralism and Peace, University of Bologna, Italy).

### **Presentations Overview:**

**Prof. Mohammed Abu-Nimer**

**H.E. Faisal bin Muaammar**

**Dr. Abdullah Alhomaïd**

**H.E. Cardinal Matteo Zuppi**

**Prof. Alberto Melloni**

### **Discussion:**

### **Key Points Made:**

### **Recommended Points for G20 Dialogue:**

## PARALLEL SESSIONS

### COUNTERING HATE SPEECH AND THE USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA AS A SPACE FOR DIALOGUE

**Description:** Hate speech distorts understandings of social forces, spreads misinformation, and aggravates prejudice and discrimination. It can affect power dynamics, creating rifts and mobilising groups in ways that divide communities. In some societies, specific understandings of freedom of expression and hate speech are the topic of debate. The misuse of religion to legitimate violence in many conflict settings is a related concern. Religious leaders and faith-based organizations can play roles in preventing incitement and hate speech, reducing tensions in their communities. The United Nations Plan of Action for Religious Leaders and Actors to Prevent Incitement to Violence that Could Lead to Atrocity Crimes in 2017 reflects a commitment to better engage religious institutions in countering hate speech and incitement to violence. The session explored both actual and potential ways in which religious leaders provide alternative narratives and engage with their respective constituencies in respectful discourse. Moderated by Dr. Mustafa Ali (Secretary General of the Global Network of Religions for Children and Director of Arigatou International, Nairobi), speakers were Dr. Vinya Ariyaratne (President of the Sarvodaya Shramadana Movement, Sri Lanka), Dr. Kamal Boraiqa Abdelsalam Hassan (Member of Al-Azhar Centre for Dialogue and Supervisor at Al-Azhar Observatory for Combating Terrorism at Al-Azhar University, Egypt; KAICIID Fellow), Ms. Simona Cruciani (Political Affairs officer at the UN Office on Genocide Prevention and the Responsibility to Protect), H.E. Grand Mufti Dr. Nedžad Grabus (Mufti of the Islamic Community in Slovenia), Rev. Susan Hayward (Senior Advisor for Religion and Inclusive Societies at the U.S. Institute of Peace), Chief Rabbi David Rosen (International Director of Interreligious Affairs at the American Jewish Committee and member of KAICIID Board of Directors), Ms. Nika Saeedi (UN Policy Specialist on Gender, Political Processes and Peacebuilding at UNDP), and Emina Frljak (Education Programs Coordinator, Youth For Peace and International Youth Committee Member, Religions for Peace).

**Presentations Overview:** The panel began with a video promoting the Forum and partnership. House rules for the panel were discussed. Refrain from inflammatory language, raise questions of interest that you would like the panel to address in the chat.

**Dr. Mustafa Ali** introduced panelists. This discussion is about the role of religion in conflict prevention. Countering hate speech through social media as a space for dialogue. Hate because of color of skin can be stopped based on – love your neighbor, created that you may know each other and not despise one another. Social forces, misinformation, prejudice has contributed to an increase of hate speech. We have a panel who is to share with us how hate speech has created challenges and how faith communities can address hate speech.

**Dr. Vinya Ariyaratne** I come from a country that was affected by armed conflict for decades and faced humanitarian disasters such as tsunamis. People belong to different religions. They have demonstrated tremendous resilience. Now we are grappling with the COVID pandemic. Our country is blessed to have people who follow the major religious traditions of the world. The movement is a grassroots movement demonstrated holistic community development revolving around buddhist principles. We have reached rural people to fulfill human needs. Through its

long history of a people's movement, we have emphasized spiritual awakening as foundation for harmony and development in accordance with four principles: 1) sharing time and energy for the benefit of others, 2) use of language, 3) engaging in constructive action, 4) unless one uses language to treat one another with respect, dignity, and compassion, one cannot achieve harmony. 2500 years ago, the type of communication was in-person. With advancement of technology there are multiple forms. We witness use of channels of communication that enhance hatred and incitement to violence. Addressing hate speech through a campaign involves bringing community leaders together to draw from traditions of all faiths to address this issue. We can combine knowledge of science and technology for the benefit of humankind. The pandemic has given a new turn to hate speech. Existing prejudices have come to the forefront. Labeling people affected by COVID 19. We are struggling with this in Sri Lanka. The media has identified certain groups as being affected by COVID and agents for spreading the disease. We need to take proactive measures to counter this to safeguard the rights of those affected as well as those impacted socioeconomically by this. We need to pay attention to countering hate speech in light of the new normal of COVID-19.

**Dr. Kamal Boraiqa Abdelsalam Hassan** expressed gratitude and thanks, then pointed out hate speech points. There are many negative and widespread views across social networks such as Islamophobia, xenophobia, extremist violent acts perpetrated in the name of Islam or Islamic faith – hate speech has a vital role in committing these acts of violence. Hate speech does not admit to otherness or any other point of view in the form of gender, race because hate speech does not believe in the value of dialogue, coexistence, and speech. Hate speech negates the humanity in which god has created us all. The human being is a creature that strives to live peacefully with the other. Hate speech negates principles of religion and principles of Islam in particular which calls for learning from each other with every society and their differences. Principles that call for social cohesion – Islam admits all structural systems developed that consolidate the relations between citizens and their state and their connectedness between all peoples. It consolidates the idea of citizens that have rights and obligations. We accept the idea of the first Islamic state in the past ages of common citizenship between Muslims, Christians and Jews who all had equality before the law and equal rights and equal right to practice their own religion and tradition. This relationship between the different components of society in the first Islamic state – we can see it in Islamic sharia which admits to the pluralism of people. In the Koran, it says that if God had wanted, God would have made you all the same but you were made different so that you would know each other and cooperate. There is god's commandment found in diversity and in the principle of life. Diversity of color and diversity of structures is paramount and is the same with god's creation – religion, race, ethnicity, gender – constitutes evidence of god's will and god's creation. A free human being is able to choose and bears the consequence of their choice. According to these point, I want to stress that Arabic societies [technical difficulties] We should pay attention to using negative concepts that we use maybe unconsciously. For example, the definition of minority can have a negative impact. We should address concept of citizenship because minority bears within it the notion of discrimination. We have to define the clear line which is the difference between right to freedom of expression and hatred speech. We have to think about the legal methods that prevent incitement to hatred because they can be the first indicator. We are all proud of our religious affiliations and proud of ethnicity affiliation. We should also accept that the other is also proud of their religion or belief and we need to spread this culture of being proud together which can be effective in countering hate speech.

**Ms. Simona Cruciani** the topic of today's panel goes to the heart of my office on genocide prevention and the responsibility to protect. The first point is that my office has been engaging

during the last several years religious leaders and actors in their role in contributing to prevent incitement to violence. Incitement to violence is an indicator for atrocity crimes to be committed. Our office has been a key supporter to engage with religious leaders as participants in this work to ensure that no one is killed in atrocity crimes. We have worked tirelessly together with KAICIID and other faith-based organizations and network of traditional peacemakers to prevent incitement to violence in accordance with the plan of action. This plan includes how they can collaborate with the UN nations and be involved with other actors such as civil society, and tech and social media companies. Countering and addressing hate speech which is a precursor to preventing violence is a priority of the secretary general. He is worried about global growing trends of hate speech that hamper the UN programs and UN work. They are an obstacles to the principles and values of my organization. In 2017, he established the UN Plan and Strategy of Action on Hate Speech. It is an internal document to the UN because it aims to enhance internal cooperation aligned with human rights standards. We believe that hate speech belongs to the freedom of expression but it can be nevertheless countered with alternative speech of positive narratives. It is tackled in a comprehensive way, working with victims, protecting them, supporting an environment conducive to inclusive to tolerance for respect of human rights standards. Another element that I highlight is one of partnership. It is an internal document aimed at enhancing coordination with in the UN but we cannot tackle it on our own. We need the commitment of other actors. It is a multi-stakeholder approach. The UN partners with a variety of actors including the religious leaders and actors who play an essential role as a general agent of prevention. We have to put the issue of COVID in context. In the context of the current pandemic, we have seen a surge on hate speech that is enhancing existing trends of racism and discrimination globally. The UN Sec General has made a global call to address hate speech and he has included religious actors. We provide in this policy specific recommendations for faith actors how to handle this global issue in collaboration with the UN. Partnerships are very important for addressing hate speech. This is something we need to do together. Religious actors play an essential role in this especially when this involves engaging with social media companies that we are not as used to collaborating with. We need to do this in line with international human rights standards that respects freedom of religion or belief and opinion and discussion. I would ask religious leaders to use their voices to counter hate speech to protect vulnerable groups.

**H.E. Grand Mufti Dr. Nedžad Grabus** peace and blessing be upon you all and gratitude to the organizers. The governing principles of Muslim communities and the rest of European societies is intercultural respect and understanding. Many Muslims struggle with negative narratives, prejudice and misunderstandings. One of these problems is hate speech. How do you make a balance between freedom of expression and the problem of hate speech. Freedom of religion which we enjoy thanks to the UN Declaration of Human Rights and EU documents must be respected. Freedom of expression – violence against any person must be stopped wherever it occurs. Voices which express debate even about the most sensitive issues must be acknowledged. This is not easy but we must make an effort. Oxford dictionary defines hate speech as “ “. There has been much debate over freedom of speech and hate speech legislation. The law may identify a group based on certain characteristics. Laws differ in different countries. Hate speech laws are of two types: preserving public order and human dignity. Prohibiting by law hate speech is complicated. We must consider that there are people who do not know enough about other religions needs to be taken into consideration. One of the pillars is to support and identify our views in formal and non-formal education. There we learn about differences, mutual respect and the dignity of human life. It is problematic when educational materials support religious illiteracy. Formal education can create specific understandings or misunderstandings of other religions. This is one of the sources of hate speech. How do we speak about others? How do we speak about other religions in our meetings? How do we speak in our own religious

services about religious others? If we can speak about them in ways that they would agree with, this will make a contribution to positive change. Religious people must be reliable actors so that people with political power will take them seriously. If we shift our discourse every day and do not know what we want in our presentations about our religions, the political actors will not take us seriously or be on our side if we want to make a difference. We have to speak about others' beliefs and understand their perspectives so we can reduce hate speech about other people. The importance of Charter of Mekka last year and other documents produced by Muslim institutions were mentioned. We have to agree that we do not accept any form of hate speech. We have to develop critical thinking about different issues in recognition that we have differing standards. This is not only a possibility to present or represent our ideas, this is also a possibility to learn from each other as I learned today how Rev. Susan Hayward emphasizes that so many differences among Christians about same or different issues. Similarly, Muslims are not homogeneous. We need to promote this understanding of religion.

**Rev. Susan Hayward** addressed the gendered nature of hate speech that targets women and sexual and gender minorities. A good amount of hate speech polices women who are outspoken or who step outside gender norms. Hate speech often reinforces conservative and sometimes oppressive gender norms. In Myanmar, we tracked hate speech moving into their election. Anti-women speech was strong. There was a woman featured prominently in the election. Women who supported a package of laws were targeted by the police who accused them were accused of being promiscuous and targeted with violence. We saw this in the presidential elections of 2016 and today. Protecting women by the sexual violence of immigrant men when data shows that the biggest threat of violence of women are people they know. Women are being accused of being traitors targeting even women who hold prominent positions serving their government. This gendered dimension is of significance and it must be addressed in efforts to stop hate speech. This is very important for religious actors to address this gendered dimension because religion has something to do with how gender norms are understood. The same goes with language regarding LGBTQ+. This needs to be called out along with language targeting racial minorities and religious minorities. Gendered hate speech needs to be included in campaigns that address hate speech. She underscored the importance of under covering the small networks that fund the hate campaigns. Any effort to address it must be just as savvy and strategic involving action as well as words. The Hebrew scriptures recognizes that the act of speaking creates worlds. Using proper speech can be a spiritually liberating force. Speech with action can create environments for sustainable peace.

**Chief Rabbi David Rosen** I have been brought into this panel with the dubious honor to represent the arguably longest hated minority of human record and memory. (The longest hatred book). Antisemitism is a paradigm that serves as a model to understand the different aspects and impulses of hatred that manifests itself. The term antisemitism is not necessarily a very felicitous one. Not very precise. Leon Pinsker in 1880 used a better term – Judeophobia – to describe this mystifying impulse of hostility towards Jews. Hostility towards others whether real or perceived normally relates to some particular group that has some kind of capacity to undermine the interests of another group. It is interesting to explore how a small vulnerable almost impotent community can be the target of so much hatred. Lately it has increased with impulse and unholy alliances with this perplexing hostility towards people of Jewish origin. One clear reason we can understand for this lengthy history of prejudice is because Jews were more often than not the only Other present. Jews had been scattered but now they were scattered around the world living in mostly Christian societies that were relatively homogeneous. They were not only homeless and dependent upon the hospitality of others but they were also seen as being useful in terms of trade and development – mobile, multilingual, connections all over the world. They would be in

a community for a while and then cast out. There was some suspicion and served as someone to blame when things went wrong (scapegoats). There was a need that they satisfied – others put their fears on the shoulders of those who are different. Because the Jewish observances were different and they sought to live in their own community and their observances had bearing on hygiene, Jews were forcibly and voluntarily quarantined. When Jews were dying in perhaps less numbers than quarantine, it was a by-product of their way of life. That abetted the scapegoating phenomena and conspiracy theories. In places where there are no Jews whatsoever - China – and yet it is portrayed as a Jewish conspiracy to do harm to those who are not Jews. What is unique and special in anti-Semitism is the religious dimension. This predates the monotheistic traditions. It existed in Greece. When you have those that come with universal claims that ours is the right way, then you have a further overlay of prejudice. With Christianity, it became even more acute because of how they saw themselves as a continuation of the original heritage. Jewish rejection of their claims led to a demonization of Jews as in league with the devil and therefore condemned to wander forever. Jewish homelessness was considered divinely bestowed upon them. The holocaust could not have succeeded to the extent that it did had the land not been tilled previously by the suspicion and prejudice against Jewish communities. Jews were invited in to help facilitate trade and then they would get prohibited from doing anything other than trade – not allowed to be a part of guilds with specific skills – the one area they could be involved in was money lending. The church encouraged them to be money lenders. The victim is to blame emerged. Racial antisemitism is a relatively new phenomena born out of nationalism of 19<sup>th</sup> century. This produced xenophobia and fear of loss of identity. Particularly in Germany where theories of antisemitism were more sophisticated (e.g., Wilhelm Marr's essays on the purity of whites). Today, in addition to these aspects of anti-Semitism which is paradigmatic of expressions targeted at various minorities, we have the phenomenon of holocaust denial. This is a form of transferring one's own guilt through blaming the victim. Political prejudice has particularly targeted the Jewish state, given that much criticism of the Jewish state is legitimate. But there are exaggerations that blame the Jewish state for collapse of other failed states in the middle east, etc. Jewish identity has become a lightning rod for all kinds of prejudices. Holocaust denial is often expressed for political reasons where people are concerned about their own political history. Because holocaust denial tries to prepare the way for the legitimation of atrocities – once you diminish its significance, the capacity to commit atrocities is so much easier. Resurgence of hate reflects a brutalization in society that relates to social media. Today, people who would have been marginal and not heard have the capacity to spew their filth out against communities in ways they could not do before. Part of the resurgence has been facilitated by the modern technological capacities. We have seen this in particular during the COVID pandemic. We need to engage these tools to effectively combat through control – acknowledging protection of freedom of expression – in a manner that ensures that more just expressions combat those who seek to utilize these tools to advance their own malevolence and hostility.

**Ms. Nika Saeedi** COVID is shaking the structure of health, education and economic systems. It is causing strife, apathy and perhaps most important fear and uncertainty that drive hate speech. Public discourse is weaponized to dehumanize women, migrants and many others. This pits us against them. Others shared real life examples of this. We know that this has catastrophic tragedies. We said never again but here it is again. Entrenched political views are encouraged by economic incentives. Internet users are seen as commodities rather than human beings. We are here to identify our shared values. Connected more than ever, we are exploring how digital platforms can contribute to societal harmony and stimulate conversations. Many communities of faith. Many journalistic outlets are sharing stories of ordinary people that are shared globally. Random acts of kindness are more evident. Technology advances have enabled more than half of the world to have access to the internet. Social media can be a force of good. As a global

community, we can create opportunities for faith based actors to talk about things that unite us. UNDP is learning how to further amplify promotion of peace and harmony to combat the voices of extremism. UNDP has learned that dialogue and consultation and creating space for artistic expression – arts matters – is powerful. Sharing diverse life experiences and provision of platforms for different perspectives is a positive view of diversity. This initiative uses the arts to promote critical thinking and enable young people to become media savvy. Media literacy training to be conscientious media citizens. Private sector partnerships with Facebook and YouTube actors. This initiative has a wide audience creating opportunities in Bangkok. In first three months it has reached 13 million users. Faith based actors with personal understanding of the lives of those impacted by hate speech can be powerful advocates for ensuring equal citizenship for all and heard by decision makers so that those responsible can do their job. Promoting humanity, dignity, collective destiny on a shared planet are values that can be expressed on digital technologies to create positive online environments. Shared principles and norms inform the global agenda. How can we strengthen social cohesion and restore trust? Measuring impact is important despite the measurement challenges would be a breakthrough in our work. We need collaboration with faith based actors on this.

**Emina Frljak** presented recommendations by young people on how to counter hate speech. These recommendations were the product of discussion led among 25 young people coming from different countries, religious, ethnic and cultural backgrounds during the KAICIID G20 Interfaith Virtual Forum that was held on October 8<sup>th</sup>, 2020:

Challenge 1 – Capacity and tools to identify, address, and prevent hate speech

**Recommendation 1:** Education authorities should prioritize the introduction of modules on digital literacy into school and further education curricula. People who lack the skills to navigate online platforms and analyse online sources critically are left vulnerable to the prevailing “infodemic”. Skills can also be fostered via informal means, such as games.

**Recommendation 2:** Social media platforms should sharpen and either unify or harmonize their definitions and policies concerning hate speech. They should use their platforms and their respective influencers to promote digital literacy and responsible posting.

**Recommendation 3:** Funding should be provided for opportunities for public-private partnerships to prevent spread of hate speech and encourage encounters. Many young people lack practical knowledge about other faiths but asking questions can draw the suspicion that the person asking might be considering conversion; therefore public-private initiatives are invited to create safe online spaces for youth from different faiths to meet and ask questions without stigma.

Challenge 2 – Hate speech versus freedom of speech

**Recommendation 1:** Equal application of legal measures: Objective analysis of derogatory speech and how it affects religions should be conducted on a national basis. Responses and policies should be applied equally, regardless of whether a majority or minority faith is affected.

**Recommendation 2:** Awareness-raising: We need to make people more sensitive to the reality of hate speech and its consequences. Young people should be encouraged and empowered to spread awareness of the profound negative psychological effects it can have.

**Recommendation 3:** Religious teachers/community leaders should complete mandatory training which includes awareness of other faiths and how to spread positive and responsible messages in their teaching, avoiding messages of hate.

**Recommendation 4. Education:** curricula should be introduced which robustly cover hate speech and responsible use of social media. Foster dialogue skills and practice: educators for every age group should focus on building the capacity to hold sensitive, difficult dialogues and to manage grievances and differences constructively. Encourage empathy-driven education both in schools and informally which allows for direct encounter between members of different social groups.

### Challenge 3 – Countering hate speech in political discourses

**Recommendation 1:** A compulsory course on responsible public communication should be introduced for anyone assuming public office. Introduce and/or consistently enforce legal measures to penalize public figures whose words infringe upon human rights and the rights of minorities.

**Recommendation 2:** States should be empowered to reduce the minimum age to run for office to better represent demographic shifts nationally. Only 2% of parliamentarians are under 30. This change would have an impact upon political discourse that is more representative of young people's aspirations to inherit more just societies. It will also inspire more women to get involved in politics and ensure violence and hate are addressed differently.

**Recommendation 3:** States should refrain from weaponizing digital media platforms under national security laws and prevent peaceful freedom of expression. Knowing the influence they wield, social media should take measures to ensure that they remain politically neutral and as free from political manipulation as possible.

**Zafer Nahassi** (KAICIID Fellow) gave three major recommendations from discussion group of KAICIID Fellows network. Policies based on cooperation and not being weapons or means of political pressure. Deals with prosecution of hate speech through legal departments. KAICIID Fellows advocate for a course on pedagogical education which means for open minded schools and universities. They called for social media butterflies to counter hate speech.

Several questions submitted by the audience were discussed such as: What needs to be done to ensure that the Social Media platforms are adhering to the UN platforms of hate speech. How can we differentiate between hate speech and religious freedom. What is the role of interreligious dialogue and action to addressing hate speech? What kind of partnerships help to address this? What kind of policies would address hate speech?

Discussion emphasized the countering of hate speech with counter positive narratives that are in line with international human rights standards so that freedom of speech is honored. They spoke about working closely with tech companies. In June the UN hosted a roundtable to address the UN plan of action on hate speech. They are working with Facebook, Twitter and Google to implement this plan of action. In terms of suppression of minority voices, hate speech laws are often used to suppress the voices of minorities. They believe that implementing the UN policy on hate speech supports civic space where people have an opportunity to peacefully express their opinions. This is why they are emphasizing the UN policy on civic space. In this collaboration we also announce the inclusion of everyone including vulnerable groups and minorities.



Religious groups standing in solidarity with one another and educating communities about how to respond to others to demonstrate solidarity to counteract the hate speech is essential interfaith work. Demonstrating their shared repudiation of hate is enormously powerful. If we are ignorant about one another then prejudice can flourish. Interreligious literacy is not a luxury – it is critical. We need to educate regarding religious literacy. Without religious literacy we will continue to have misrepresentations, misquotations, things taken out of context and so the critical interreligious collaboration is predicated on knowledge, education and literacy of one another. Striving for universal norms that constitute human rights and respect for diversity even with a universal system makes it difficult to come up with one model that works across the board but there is a constant process of interpretation and dynamism as different nations are in dialogue around the world. Dialogue is a process of interpretation that helps constitute the international legal system – the dialogue must be constant and ongoing as we seek to apply international norms across the board. It must involve respect. In situations there is often argued one position that constitutes that culture’s position on any given issue but oftentimes in reality even within one religion or culture there is a lot of diversity internal to that group. In the US, media will say “American Christians believe this...” but the reality is that there are many diverse American Christian communities and positions about what is the right way to understand those issues and respond to them. This element of religious literacy involves recognition that religions and cultures are constantly going through these interpretive processes and there is enormous diversity on the ground. When forming partnerships, be aware of the digital divide bringing in the service providers themselves. In Sri Lanka, they brought in Facebook to help them counter hate speech to help them identify trends and origins of hate speech. They interact with important stakeholders vertically and horizontally when addressing hate speech. It is important to characterize hate speech to create messages which confront such hate speech. We need to understand the reasons and roots of hate speech in order to recognize the symptoms and remedy it and concentrate on the means to counter it. Dialogue on the basis of respecting the other is needed for the sake of human beings. Education that stresses these values through online courses is needed. Religions did not come with hate but emphasize peaceful coexistence to work for peaceful humanity.

## **RELIGIOUS CULTURAL HERITAGE, HUMAN DIGNITY AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT**

**Description:** Religious cultural heritage is emerging as a new engagement point for reaching the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). This adds an important dimension to ongoing work on protecting sacred sites. New thinking points to ways that protecting and cultivating religious cultural heritage can advance many SDGs. Sacred sites serve as a meeting point for development of dialogical civic spaces and as an area for exchange in the religious and cultural spheres. At the same time, work in this area has become more complex because shared and contested sites have been weaponised as focal points of acts of religious or ethnic hatred and of state-sponsored geopolitical agendas. This raises a number of challenges of how to manage complex custodianship relationships of religious associations and heritage authorities without infringing upon religious autonomy and freedom of religion or belief on the one hand, and wider civic and cultural expectations on the other. This session builds on the important work and leadership of the United Nations Alliance of Civilizations and other stakeholders to suggest important ways that the safeguarding of sacred sites and religious cultural heritage can help further broader initiatives to advance sustainable development goals. Moderated by Prof. Peter Petkoff (Director of the Religion, Law and International Relations Programme, Centre for Religion and Culture at Regent's Park College, University of Oxford, United Kingdom), speakers were H.R.H. Amb. Princess Haifa al-Mograin (Permanent Delegate of The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia to the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization; Chair of the G20 Development Working Group), Msgr. David-Maria A. Jaeger OFM (Prelate Auditor of the Court of the Roman Rota), Ms. Ana Jimenez (Political Advisor at United Nations Alliance of Civilizations), Prof. Paul Morris (UNESCO Chair in Interreligious Understanding and Relations at Victoria University of Wellington, New Zealand), Dr. Tugba Tanyeri-Erdemir (Non-Resident Research Associate at Department of Anthropology at the University of Pittsburgh, USA), and Dr. Michael Winer (Human Rights Officer at the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights).

### **Presentations Overview:**

**Prof. Peter Petkoff** introduced the topics emphasizing that there are no international legislations that deal specifically with religious cultural heritage. They exist in multiple settings. Issues surrounding this topic involve human rights, rights to private property, the legacy of colonization, and environmental protection. The topic also connects with multiple Sustainable Development Goals. He asked panelists to speak to how the preservation of religious cultural heritage contributes to the building of dialogical and inclusive civic spaces and relate that to the wider achievement of the SDGs. Panelists were asked to address the role museums play in being aware of religious significance and creating safe dialogical space. He spoke about recent changes with Hagia Sophia under the leadership of Erdogan.<sup>23</sup> Although there has always been a small mosque open on the site, what is the role of the State in making an executive decision that steers a heritage in one direction or another? This issue has importance beyond religion. How can we imagine religious sites as sites for cultural meetings and sites for peace-making and dialogue? How do we connect cultural heritage and religious cultural heritage? Can this be built into Action Plans for achieving the SDGs? How do we make holistic civic spaces that foster inclusive growth and environmental protection? There are emerging new practices that look at sites in terms of both religious and non-religious practices. UNESCO is now considering how sites are

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<sup>23</sup> For more information, see <https://www.cnn.com/2020/07/10/europe/hagia-sophia-mosque-turkey-intl/index.html>.

used for religious and cultural practices. Historically, they had stayed away from religion. This topic also has implications for Indigenous religious cultural groups and their rights. Religious leaders have become more savvy as they participate in drafting legislation. They begin to better understand international mechanisms and international systems.

**H.R.H. Amb. Princess Haifa al-Mograin** talked about a great linkage that exists between cultural heritage and religion. One out of five UNESCO sites has religious significance. What is at issue is the involvement of State Parties and international heritage. Preservation of the sites and properties allows for the integration of several SDGs. For example, SDG 11 emphasizes making cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable. The topic also connects to SDG 16 which emphasizes peace, justice and strong institutions and the promotion of peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development. The responsibility for preserving heritage sites often lies within the states. The role is to be engaged, asking how we can integrate heritage preservation into future development conversations. Let's look forward as we address issues and look for ways to improve how this is done. Let's address multiple dimensions, and intangible as well as tangible aspects as we work together to protect and promote cultural heritage. This provides a great role for States. This could be a platform for an international convention to preserve and protect religious heritage. NGOs have a role to play in educating and informing people as do social media outlets. Media partners might explore, in relation to SDG Goal 17 *Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the global partnership for sustainable development*, how to mitigate the use of hate speech. In Saudi Arabia, there is a centre for combatting extreme ideologies. Human rights are fundamental to achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals. Religious leaders can play several roles. They play a role as 'rights holders,' they create safe spaces to exchange ideas, they look to establishing right legal rights, they help remove stereotypes, and they are capacity builders. Political will is needed in this process.

**Prof. Paul Morris** emphasized that the protection of religious sites has particular implications for Indigenous peoples. The protection of sites are tangible linkages, but religious, culture and spirituality expressions are intangible. Religious rituals express the spirituality of people who have ties to the sites. The notion of religious heritage has an important dimension that is connected to a broader international agenda. There is an increasing appreciation for the notion of religious heritage (including among minority communities). Protection of heritage sites involves internal State dialogue and between-States dialogue with interfaith components. Religion is embedded within individuals. Religious heritage is integrated into a number of SDG goals. Protection of religious sites is significantly connected to religious expressions. Sites also remind people of historical experiences. An important relationship in heritage protection is management of the intangibles. If poorly managed, the antithesis emerges: conflict. Peace requires an understanding of a broader religious cultural heritage. This perspective requires a post-colonial reflection on the broader context of religious heritage protection. For example, climate change has led to the disappearance of important minority cultures and peoples. Prior to the events in New Zealand at Christ Church, there had been a dismissal of securitization of religious sites. Now there is a recognition that places of worship might not be safe sites. The revised *Plan of Action* is an exciting development that has support at the highest levels.<sup>24</sup> New Zealand recently passed new hate speech legislation and they have been doing more extensive mapping of religious sites. Religious diversity is a fact in New Zealand. It is important that the stakeholder approach create spaces for religious voices that goes beyond just religious leaders. The evolving

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<sup>24</sup> For more information, see <https://peacekeeping.un.org/en/revised-action-plan-to-improve-security-of-peacekeepers>.

plan promises grassroots involvement. This certainly brings religious cultural heritage into the SDG process. He did express a slight concern about only adopting a human rights perspective as if it were the only approach taken by stakeholders. He prefers a cosmopolitan perspective that supports an internationalist framework and helps mobilize transnational organizations. International human rights calls for a broader cosmopolitan perspective so that we can internationalize our concerns.

**Dr. Tugba Tanyeri-Erdemir** emphasized that there are multiple dimensions to the protection of religious and cultural heritage sites. One approach could be referred to as ‘Museumification’ where preservation is narrowly construed to mean “preservation” of religious cultural heritage. A negative example of what *not* to do is Hagia Sophia in Istanbul, Turkey. It is an ancient Orthodox structure, built in Byzantine times. After the conquest of Constantinople, it became a mosque. With museumification, Hagia Sophia became a site of co-existence. Under Erdogan, Hagia Sophia reverted back to being a mosque. The conversion was made with a “conquest” narrative. This is problematic. In this case, the State has been a dominating force, managing Hagia Sophia as a symbol of conquest. When people visit, how are they to identify with the structure: as conquered or as conquerors? This management paradigm contradicts the ethics of living together. Good management comes through peacebuilding with intentional efforts intended to bring reconciliation. There are numerous ways to work with heritage sites. The current framework of ‘preservation’ is based on the notion of Nation States. Hagia Sophia is an example where only one Nation State made the decision, but visitors come from many Nation States to visit. We need to think creatively about the importance of religious heritage. There are two additional examples of restoration from Turkey. The first is in Eastern Turkey in 2010. The site has been beautifully preserved. It operates as a museum. One day per year, Armenians can use it for religious ceremonies. The second example is in Western Turkey. In this case, restoration of the site was done with the involvement of the Armenian community. Restoration acknowledged their hardships. Turks, Kurds, and Armenians were provided with opportunities to share their experiences with one another. Some things to think about include going beyond the nation state as the sole decision maker and consider, what is the site’s meaning to various communities?

**Msgr. David-Maria A. Jaeger OFM** emphasized that the first narrative that should override all other narratives is that the place is a sacred site. He also emphasized that sacred sites are valuable. The protections requested by religious groups for religious sites must remain. These are rights of private property. Sacred sites are the property of religious groups, not the state. The sites are first and foremost sacred. When sites are opened to visitors, they are there on sufferance, by permission of the religious group. For example, Christ Church Meadow in Oxford, England. Religious leaders have the right to shut down sites. It is their site. He talked about the exercise of soft power in international relations when developing international law. When developing conventions, private property rights should be prioritized. The protection of sites can be made more effective by improving monitoring, making violations known, holding state accountable by influencing their public reputations. Conventions will be ineffective if they are not monitored and enforced.

**Dr. Michael Winer** discussed how religious cultural heritage links to the Sustainable Development Goals. Religious cultural heritage has three direct entry points: Goal 16.1 *Significantly reduce all forms of violence and related death rates everywhere*; Goal 11.4 *Strengthen efforts to protect and safeguard the world’s cultural and natural heritage*; and Goal 10.2. *By 2030, empower and promote the social, economic and political inclusion of all,*

*irrespective of age, sex, disability, race, ethnicity, origin, religion or economic or other status.* It is important that we try not to conceive of things in silos. We need to note the interdependencies involved with a variety of issues. Peacebuilding is paramount in the process. The Special Rapporteur in Cypress recommends the ongoing inclusion of religious cultural sites in building peace. The Cypress Peace Talks resulted in opening, cleaning and maintaining places of worship. President Nicos Anastasiades of Cyprus has indicated that he is ready to resume talks.<sup>25</sup> Michael also expressed excitement over the recent *Plan of Action* revision. The United Nations has worked with the Alliance of Civilizations on hate speech and protection of religious sites. He emphasized the importance of inclusive education, peer-to-peer education, and storytelling. There should be no silos at the United Nations. Stakeholders can be engaged via UN treaties, special procedures, and special rapporteurs. There are four pillars for engagement: construction and ownership of religious sites, accessing and use of religious sites, protection of religious sites from attacks, and preservation of religious sites. States need to be recognized as formal actors. However, human rights obligations must also apply to non-state actors. For example, the Taliban was destroying Buddhist sites.

**Ms. Ana Jimenez** discussed how the UN Alliance of Civilizations can work towards having places of worship become sites for achieving *SDG 4 Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all*; *SDG 10 Reduce inequality within and among countries*; and *SDG 11 Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable*. It is very important that we not work in silos. Education plays an important role in all of this. Stakeholders have interlocking interests. Stakeholders should be involved in the consultation process. Different stakeholders will have well defined specific ideas, so bring them together in a consultation process. When asked how the *Plan of Action* recently evolved in ways that were driven by security issues, she indicated that it evolved because of terrorist attacks. The *Plan of Action* is inclusive and extensive. It had inclusion of consultation with stakeholders, emphasizing dialogue and understanding with a specific focus. Prevention, preparedness and response are emphasized. A broader approach emphasizing education, dialogue and online hate speech has been incorporated. The focus is on how religious leaders can build safe spaces for dialogue and learning. The global communications campaign helps people feel connection to religious sites. There is a universality to religious sites. We need to work with stakeholders to avoid a silo approach.

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<sup>25</sup> For more on resuming the peace talks, see <https://news.un.org/en/story/2020/09/1073512>.

## HUMAN TRAFFICKING AND MODERN SLAVERY

**Description:** The horrors of human trafficking and different forms of modern slavery cause deep suffering to many who have little capacity to defend themselves. International law, police action and national efforts address some facets of the complex phenomenon but far more needs to be done. Strong religious voices give a high priority to this topic.; An array of religious initiatives address the issues, but coordination among them and with secular actors is generally poor. The commitment to SDG target 8.7, to eradicate modern slavery, frames this round table which looks at strengthening both moral leadership and practical means to bring these scourges to an end so that relevant corporations, organizations and individuals exercise their due diligence to slavery-proof their supply chains. Moderated by Dr. S. Ayse Kadayifci-Orellana (Research Affiliate at Georgetown Institute for Women, Peace and Security, Adjunct Professor, Georgetown University, USA), speakers were H.E. Amb. Ramón Blecua (Ambassador at large for Mediation and Intercultural Dialogue of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, European Union and Cooperation, Spain), Mr. Kevin Hyland (Former first independent Anti-Slavery Commissioner of the United Kingdom), Rev. Richard Sudworth (Secretary for Inter Religious Affairs to the Archbishop of Canterbury and National Inter Religious Affairs Advisor and member of KAICIID Board of Directors), Don. Dr. Michael H. Weninger (Member of the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue at the Vatican), and Mr. Hani Dawah (Deputy for Media to the Senior Advisor of the Mufti of Egypt; member at the Executive Committee at Platform for Dialogue and Cooperation among Religious Institutions in the Arab World and KAICIID Fellow).

### Presentations Overview:

**Dr. S. Ayse Kadayifci-Orellana** The moderator's introduction highlighted the urgency and global dimensions of the challenges presented by human trafficking and modern slavery, and the importance of religious roles. There are many worthwhile faith-linked initiatives, but they tend to be poorly coordinated so greater impact is possible. The panel focus should be on best practices and on ways to extend their impact.

**Don. Dr. Michael H. Weninger** The topic of human trafficking and modern slavery has been a priority for the G20 Interfaith Forum for the past three years, with specific policy recommendations presented to G20 leaders that have highlighted proposed G20 action as well as actions to be taken by religious communities. The panel discussion pursued many of the themes addressed in prior years, including those highlighted in the draft [policy brief](#). Underlying themes in the discussion included repeated statements of moral outrage at the suffering of victims of human trafficking and other forms of modern slavery and thus the need for action and partnerships across sectors to end it, and the links between conflicts and trafficking and abuse of people across the world, thus highlighting the need for stronger action to prevent and resolve conflicts. The mixed roles of religious actors was addressed, including courageous and committed people who work from many directions to support victims, but also religious teachings, even in distorted forms, that contribute to the problem. A common theme was an emphasis on human dignity with many assertions of the inherent equal value of each person. Underage marriage was highlighted as an issue where religious leaders could make a difference. In sum, the issues of human trafficking and modern slavery extend from very global, transnational, interreligious aspects to very local manifestations, highlighting the shared responsibilities of global leaders and institutions and of individuals, who need to be aware and to contribute to action. He also highlighted the horrifying drama of trafficking and slavery with its brutality and use of threats and force. It involves the use of power for the purpose of exploitation.

He also highlighted the links between migration and trafficking, as well as new forms of slavery that are part of the new economy. Clear and honest language is needed. Religious teachings are involved, largely wrong interpretations of religious practice, for terrorism. He cited the examples of women and children abused in suicide bombings, females under male dominance, and forced marriages, but also the acceptance of violence in various forms. Religion can be misused and instrumentalized, and this must be brought to the attention of political decision makers. Interreligious dialogue can augment the desire to find common action and play important roles in prevention. He highlighted the roles over decades of the Catholic Church, including statements during Vatican II, reaffirmed by several Popes since then. The Church has emphasized that people should never be mere tools for profit, which is an affront to fundamental values. Sexual exploitation is a fundamental affront to human dignity. He sees great hope in the common affirmation of principles in the 2019 agreement between Pope Francis and the Sheikh of Al-Azhar. They point to concrete steps to eliminate and prevent trafficking, including the liberation of constraints on women. Pope Francis, he said, never tires and his commitment is evident in the new encyclical, *Frattelli Tutti*, which has clear language in this regard. It is crucial to fight for the elimination of structures that allow the exploitation of people and their bondage, that allow it to be a lucrative business. The structures are economic, social, political, and even religious. The need is to join all existing forces to fight for a more just world. Indifference is a primary enemy. He pointed to the often silent efforts of those fighting the problem, including the women's religious congregations. They deserve more appreciation from the Church and society, The essence of his plea is to act to ensure that where religion is manipulated and abused to offend the dignity of humanity in the worst ways, action is taken, so that the true essence of religion, which is to promote dignity and humanity, is upheld. Interreligious dialogue, of which KAICIID is a remarkable model, is needed.

**H.E. Amb. Ramón Blecua** highlighted the pervasive modern presence of modern slavery, a phenomenon he called staggering in its size and harm, and one that is growing in size and complexity. He stressed the links to migration, where an economic venture can turn into a ferocious trap. While conflict prevention and resolution are an increasing political focus, there is too little recognition that trafficking is a central, not a side effect, and that the drivers of conflict create new and perverse dynamics. Those in positions to benefit include organizations like Daesh and Boko Haram that use religious arguments to justify slavery. Interreligious dialogue and promotion of tolerance and new narratives need to be center stage in conflict resolution, and processes of prevention and protection need to work more effectively. Interreligious dialogue offers important avenues to address the phenomenon. He also highlighted United Nations and European Union roles, with the history of 20 years since the Palermo dialogue both inspirational and discouraging. Legal instruments need increasing focus, with particular emphasis on protection of women and children. Other aspects, however, including consumption patterns and simple awareness of the problem. His core message returned to the need for a sense of urgency and humanity, including awareness and taking responsibility for diverse roles. During discussion, Ambassador Blecua expanded on his recommendation to deepen work on conflict resolution to address trafficking and slavery. It is vital to go beyond the political and struggles for power, and thus concentrate on how conflicts impact the most vulnerable in communities. With gender a transversal issue in conflict resolution, trafficking and modern slavery are often a result of modern conflict. This needs to be integrated in projects. If we do not do better in conflict prevention, there will be more refugees, prey to traffickers. It is not only large criminal networks that are involved. For those in vulnerable positions, many including ourselves may take advantage, offering lower wages, for example. The problems do touch us all, and like it or not we are caught in dark webs of crime. The law and judiciary have roles to play but it is far better to have safety nets before problems arises.

**Rev. Richard Sudworth** drew on the [Clewer Initiative of the Church of England](#) to address modern slavery, stressing the pervasive presence of the challenge even 200 years after slavery was abolished. The global dimensions are enormous but even in the UK there are 136,000 victims, often “hidden in plain sight in our communities”. The COE effort focuses on the community, starting with parishes, then to dioceses. Work can and needs to be done at the local level. Measures he highlighted included awareness and reinforcing networks that link knowledge and possibilities to act including focusing on support to victims. An App, for example, focuses on signs to watch for in car washes. Parishes and dioceses can link to government agencies, charities, and other faith networks. A goal is to encourage parishes and dioceses to learn from one another and work towards a common goal. Lesson plans for church schools aim to help children spot the signs of risk so they are not a prey. “Stories in the street” points to signs within communities of exploitation and vulnerabilities. Efforts continue, extending to the Anglican Communion worldwide, though the lockdown makes it all more difficult. The core message is that everyone is made in the image of God: God sees us and we can do so also.

**Mr. Kevin Hyland** highlighted international agreements (notably SDG 8.7<sup>26</sup>), the Palermo agreement, and the designation of October 18 as a European Day to mark the suppression of modern slavery. He highlighted Pope Francis’ commitment to the challenge, during his address at the United Nations five years ago and in many other settings. Hyland, however, sees a regression since 2015, the more so now with the foundations of the world shaken to the core by COVID-19, which has revealed and accentuated clusters of vulnerability. This has terrible consequences for the most vulnerable, but even before it the benefits of growth failed to reach millions. The symptoms of trafficking and slavery are everywhere, with impunity a major problem. The challenge is accentuated by the fact that many elements of the problem are hidden, for example in trade transactions and garment production and trade. In looking to solutions, he emphasized that economic and social norms need to be restructured. When there are feelings of anxiety, hopelessness, or fear of failure, it is essential to reflect on the hundreds of millions who have suffered in darkness. The need is for more action, with strategies that remodel risk and accountability in ways that prevent trafficking and exploitation. History shows that times of the greatest tragedy often see the best response. There are great strengths to draw on including the courage of victims and those working to support them. In response to the question of what the G20 should do, he highlighted the need to use the international mechanisms that exist, including the reporting on Trafficking in Persons, critical friends, and others. Besides the classic instruments of prevention, protection, and prosecution he adds a fourth P, partnership. And the need is to address root causes which are greed and money, thus the profitability of trafficking. Recruitment fees are a good example of an area where action is possible and needed. We need a notion of tainted money, with the principle that no one should profit from crime. People of faith can be drivers for change, especially in the new world order that will arise from COVID. During discussion, Kevin Hyland addressed several questions turning about financial benefits and routes towards solutions. He focused on public procurement and other aspects of supply chains. The objective should be to eliminate illicit financial gains. Identifying those who profit, for example from sex trafficking, needs to look to property owners, for example. Eliminating recruitment fees is possible and desirable. All work should come with dignity. He pointed to the Santa Marta group as an example of how very local concerns and initiatives can take on a global dimension, in this case with the full support of Pope Francis. It began with a meeting in a church hall just

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Target 8.7 calls for taking immediate and effective measures to eradicate forced labour, end modern slavery and human trafficking and secure the prohibition and elimination of the worst forms of child labour, including recruitment and use of child soldiers, and by 2025 to end child labour in all its forms.



north of London. There is remarkable connectivity in faith. Communities, starting with the sharing of best practice. Moral leadership focused on delivering on promises is a driver for action.

**Mr. Hani Dawah** focused on the positives and negatives of modern technology which plays roles in efforts to put an end to human trafficking in all its forms. With 40 million people suffering, history, sociology, economics, and religion are all involved, with complex reasons behind trends. Wars, conflict, coercion, and religion are all involved. Smuggling, for example, is a flagrant human rights violation linked to many other factors. The problems are present in all countries and cultures. Religions including Islam have long fought to put an end to slavery and exploitation. A core issue is social inequality and the dignity of the human being is at the heart of the issue. Many religious texts encourage Muslims not to use practices like slavery. There is, however, a need to correct some false ideas, including some surrounding new types of slavery that endanger all humanity. A specific evil is the marriage of young women, a heritage in Arab countries, but a misinterpretation of texts. This is happening among Syrian refugee and migrants. The position of the Muslim religion is against this practice, which has a negative impact on young girls. It is necessary to prohibit by law the marriage of minors. Child labor is a second major challenge; 26% of modern slaves are children, in households, industry, etc. Some are kidnapped with some political party support. Daesh has exploited many children. In Egypt, many children 12-17 are working. Egypt has adopted laws and there are fatwas, but failures of implementation confirm that it is important that we fight against children working. The Prophet Mohammed was against it. As to suggestions for action, the religious academy and civil society should cooperate to increase awareness and fight against slavery. Religion, the academy, and civil society should meet and formulate concrete suggestions. Also important are international partnerships among religious institutions and periodic campaigns with official organizations. Schools and universities have important roles; the topic should be included in the curriculum, with courses on issues to increase awareness. Allocating charitable donations to Christian and Muslim organizations could enhance the fight against slavery. Social media may offer the most efficient means for younger generations.

### **Discussion:**

- The panel responded to questions about why prosecutions and convictions are so low, confirming that the vast majority of cases are not prosecuted. There is an urgent need to upgrade and refocus processes.
- Panel members addressed issues for religious structures. They highlighted interreligious dialogue as a positive route that should also include constructive confrontation. Highlighting the religious related roots of these crimes is vital, including their cultural roles. Institutionalized injustice is a problem.

### **Recommendations:**

- G20 members should consider installing centralized hot lines and mechanisms to assure that buying is ethical
- G20 countries and religious groups should build networks, including relationships with statutory agencies, to identify and support groups that are hiding in plain sight

## **FAITH COMMUNITIES IN PARTNERSHIPS TO ADDRESS THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC**

**Description:** During the COVID-19 pandemic, faith communities have played crucial roles, both in partnerships to address public health challenges and to keep societies functioning during lockdowns and quarantines. Innovations including use of technologies may have lasting effects beyond COVID-19. From health messages and online shopping to telemedicine, from remote work and video conference calls to distance learning, the COVID-19 crisis is accelerating trends of the last decade. Religious leaders can contribute to the urgent challenges of taking lessons learned to build trustworthy information systems. In a post-COVID-19 world, how can health systems and technology more broadly reinforce human-centred and inclusive approaches? Moderated by Rev. Prof. James Christie (Ambassador-at-large of the Canadian Multifaith Federation and Professor of Whole World Ecumenism and Dialogue at the University of Winnipeg's Global College, Canada), speakers were Dr. Nezar Bahabri (Director of the Internal Medicine Department at Dr. Soliman Fakeeh Hospital, The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia), Mr. Kevin O'Brien (Executive Director of the Handa Foundation), Mr. Jean-Francois de Lavison (President and Founder of AHIMSA Fund), Ms. Sarah Hess (Technical Officer on High Impact Events Preparedness at WHO), Rabbi Namoi Kalish (Harold and Carole Wolfe Director of the Center for Pastoral Education; KAICIID Fellow), H.E. The Most Reverend Bishop Marcelo Sánchez Sorondo (President of the Pontifical Academy of Social Sciences), and Prof. Marco Ventura (Full Professor of Law and Religion at the University of Siena, Italy).

### **Presentations Overview:**

**Rev. Prof. James Christie**

**Dr. Nezar Bahabri**

**Mr. Kevin O'Brien**

**Mr. Jean-Francois de Lavison**

**Ms. Sarah Hess**

**Rabbi Namoi Kalish**

**H.E. The Most Reverend Bishop Marcelo Sánchez Sorondo**

**Prof. Marco Ventura**

## **RELIGIOUS ACTORS AND MULTILATERAL RESPONSES TO THE COVID-19 CRISIS: PRIORITIES AND ACCOUNTABILITY**

**Description:** The inequalities that the COVID-19 crisis reveals demand urgent action by world leaders. Multilateral responses that G20 leaders are considering must focus squarely on vulnerable communities, assuring that resources are used to further recovery and rebuilding and take fully into account priority needs. The essential spirit of solidarity and equity that is a foundation for the G20 ethos is echoed by religious communities across the world during the crisis, both in remarkable mobilization of resources to serve communities and in interreligious action grounded in commitment to human rights and human dignity. Religious communities have distinctive capacities to identify, serve, and direct attention to areas of need. Cooperating in efforts to assure integrity and efficiency in relief measures (both debt relief and social protection programs) is a demanding but fitting role for faith communities in this time of crisis, with the ethical teachings and pragmatic experience of different religious traditions invaluable contributors to these objectives. The measures taken in the months ahead to respond to urgent, critical needs must be undertaken with a view towards the future, building effective cooperative arrangements involving multisector actors, including religious communities, that reflect commitment to addressing inequalities, directing resources towards the most vulnerable, and assuring fully transparent and robust accountability mechanisms for use of public funds. Moderated by Prof. Katherine Marshall (Vice President, G20 Interfaith Association, Senior Fellow, Berkley Center for Religion, Peace and World Affairs, Georgetown University, and Executive Director, World Faiths Development Dialogue), speakers were Dr. Tamader Al-Rammah (Member of the United Nations Committee of Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women and Former Vice-Minister of the Ministry of Labor and Social Development, The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia), Mr. Somboon (Moo) Chungprampree (Executive Secretary of the International Network of Engaged Buddhists), H.E. The Most Reverend Bishop Matthew Hassan Kukah (Catholic Bishop of the Diocese of Sokoto, Nigeria), Prof. Jonatas Machado (Professor of International Public Law and European Union Law at University of Coimbra, Portugal), Ms. Ruth Messinger (Global Ambassador of the Jewish World Service), Prof. Juan G. Navarro Florio (Professor of Law at Pontificia Universidad Católica, Argentina), and Dr. Canon Sarah Snyder (Archbishop of Canterbury's Advisor for Reconciliation, UK).

### **Presentations Overview:**

**Prof. Katherine Marshall** We have had interesting experiences. All participants have been part of regional discussions that have preceded the Interfaith Forum. We have been grappling with this topic in general, and in relation to the G20. How would we like the G20 to respond, and how should religious communities respond? I hear three themes. The first theme addresses the ways in which governments, political and business organizations are responding to religious—government religion relationships. How does the COVID crisis affect the public/religious interface? Secondly, how do we translate the will to support the most vulnerable (women, children, refugees, beleaguered minorities) to engage with broader problems? Thirdly, the issue of management of massive financial assistance—are we at a debt standstill or should we convene new meetings? Corruption is far more complex than it may appear on the surface. In international integrity coalitions, religious voices and the religious presence is often quite limited. Religious communities haven't been an integral part of the intervention. It used to be thought that corruption was part of culture and needed to be accepted as part of the development trajectory. Now, we recognize that it threatens trust and prompts rage. It is fuel for extremists both on the right and on the left. So, will the panelists address three things: 1. Relationships

between governments and religious bodies; 2. Practical human rights and compassion issues; and 3. How do we bring religious institutions and networks into the global effort to assure the kind of accountability for the use of public resources? We need to be aware of speaking truth to power. It is harder to do in contexts where livelihoods are at stake. This is what we look to religious leaders for – a willingness to confront underlying issues. Other questions for panelists to address include: What do you want the G20 to do? What should interreligious groups do? What is the action that can take us out of the current quagmire. One thing I think we should recognize: Everyone on this panel is deeply involved with the complexity of these issues. Each one of you has a long history of courage and creativity in addressing these issues. What do we do about the challenges? For example, some religious communities say that COVID is God’s punishment of humanity. What other challenges affect the ability of religious actors to get to the table? If you’re not at the table, you end up on the menu. Another challenge relates to Faith versus Science. A tiny minority of religious groups reject science. Africa may not have suffered the impact of COVID as much as others, but worry that HIV and malaria services may be weakened. The poor and vulnerable are becoming poorer. What needs to change in global economic models? Thanks to all. I want to emphasize the important work that each one of you are doing. Thanks for your courage in taking on these issues here today. Winston Churchill is remembered for say, ‘It’s not the end, or the beginning. It’s the end of the beginning.’ I hope we can do this together.

**Prof. Jonatas Machado** Religious groups can be a major source of problems. Religious groups have an important role, but they should play this role in a humble spirit. At the national level, whether national or religious, the idea of my group or nation first isn’t helpful. Participation with multilateral institutions is helpful, and an important context for dialogue. “My state first” policies tend toward conflict. Anti-Corruption and good governance is vital. COVID-19 responses with rescue packages has compounded risks of corruption. We need transparency, accountability and civil-society monitoring. Religious groups themselves should be compliant. One of the most important ideas to take forward is the need to identify problems within countries and not wait until problems are too big to handle. We need religious and secular dialogue more than ever. There are disputed issues in human rights—abortion, euthanasia, reproductive rights. Migration also. These require continuous dialogue and engagement. There is hyper-polarization on these issues. Hate speech emerges. Fake news is circulated about these topics. Because there is no dialogue, misinformation and polarization can take hold. Different groups want to control branches of governments, etc. Yesterday, China, Russia, and Cuba were elected to the Human Rights Council of the United Nations.<sup>27</sup> There is a toxic atmosphere that needs to be addressed. It seems to me that religious communities can make a difference. *Encyclical Fratelli Tutti* was an attempt to bring some reasonableness to issues. Religious communities need to understand their role to play. Religious communities are committed to truth, dignity, and peace. They should be able to address the toxic climate that is contaminating politics in many countries. For example, in the United States, we see problems in the Supreme Court confirmation process. We need democratic compromise. We need free speech, but also regulation of media that manages fake news and hate speech. The U.S. were beacons of freedom, but now we see populist speech taking over networks. We need critical engagement of interfaith dialogue. That is why G20 Interfaith Dialogue is so timely. It is an opportunity to change the course of events throughout the world. This should be a priority. Otherwise, people will neglect human rights. People will think it is imposing an ideology on others. We need to care about the most vulnerable in society, and sow the seeds of justice so we can reap peace. Going to the question of despair. When I listen to Katherine, I have no sense of despair. There are no magic bullets. This is a complex chess game

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<sup>27</sup> For more on this, see <https://www.aa.com.tr/en/world/china-cuba-russia-elected-to-un-human-rights-council/2005381>

in which we are articulating moves of different pieces. Something really important is happening. The fact that G20 Interfaith is happening in Saudi Arabia is already a remarkable victory. The recognition that we need multilateralism. We need a social market economy. Private property, but also care for people. We don't need a planned economy. It is possible to have an economy that recognizes the environment, consumer rights, worker rights, health and educational rights that also needs to be protected. It is not capitalism or communism. There are intermediate models. There are models for a functioning economy that protects non-economic values. I am encouraged.

**Dr. Canon Sarah Snyder** picked up on the theme of corruption that correlates with high levels of religiosity. Nepotism is corrupt for some, permissible for others. Religious groups are influenced by views from outside their groups. This creates complexities when there are conflicting values from within and outside religious traditions. We need to identify possible sources of values from conflicting sources. Attitudes about corruption may differ. Socialization of religious actors is key. What texts say is not as important as what religious leaders teach about these values. Moral reasoning can play an important role in communal settings. There is a need to act according to moral conscience. Religious leaders and educators need to apply religious teachings in practical situations. The most important way to challenge the view that COVID is a punishment is to bring them into dialogue with other communities. Religious leaders disagree in a shared environment. Through the process of dialogue, some of the prejudices may be exposed to different views. The point is not to undermine other views, but it's good to involve people. As religious actors and leaders, we are embedded with communities for the long term.

**H.E. The Most Reverend Bishop Matthew Hassan Kukah** emphasized that religion and corruption exist side-by-side. When institutions don't work and people aren't secure, they turn to God. Having said that, we were caught unawares. No one was prepared for COVID-19. Corruption was strong. It is almost expected that dealing with COVID-19 would be caught in this web. Looking at the history, the Church had already responded favorably in view of Christian teachings about one's neighbor. Over time, the Church has stood side-by-side with people. There are severe limitations on infrastructure. We have a Christian Association of Nigeria, and the Supreme Council of Muslim Affairs. Different churches responded to COVID differently. At the national level, we tried to develop a national response. In our case, every diocese had to develop its own structures. We had St. Vincent DePaul Organization, so we could use that existing platform. We had to put our own house in order. The first step was to go to people having problems with food and shelter. People weren't simply waiting for the hierarchy. People simply responded at the local level. We first checked on access to food and water. Some of the fears that we had involved anxieties that people would be falling on the streets and dying. That didn't happen. There was a great deal of uncertainty about exactly what was going on. Many people had the feeling that this disease only affects those traveling abroad. We used existing structures to dialogue with Muslims. We reached out to the Association of Beggars. There was a collective feeling of vulnerability. Bureaucracy is notoriously corrupt, so there were allegations about people taking advantage of COVID-19 response. Once bureaucracy was created, service delivery was difficult. COVID has taught us our collective vulnerability, but also the importance of standing together. The Catholic Bishops' Conference made Catholic hospitals across countries available. There have been wonderful opportunities to stand together in solidarity. Going forward, we need to build on our ability to stand together.

**H.E. The Most Reverend Bishop Matthew Hassan Kukah** It's very important to understand that religion has always been seen as a problem. During the Cold War, communism created a notion that religion had no position in public space. Many states have been coming to terms with

religion. The more prosperous people became, the less religious they were. But states are now taking religion more seriously. But in light of extremism on both sides, it remains a challenge to determine how religion can serve the common good. Dialogue can be effective only if governments are doing what religions are supposed to do. But in Africa and Asia, states see interreligious dialogue as an inter-religious process, without the engagement of state actors. In reality, many of these conversations yield moral exhortations that are disconnected from reality. When government deliberately shows favoritism based on religion, gender, or class, things become very complicated. The Nigerian president has been skewing things toward Islam. That has created a lot of tension and anxiety. In this situation, dialogue becomes extremely difficult. The distribution of resources becomes complicated. That triggers a religious response, which is seen as a problem. Conflict between Christians and Muslims is often about who is in and who is out. We need to figure out the best ways of holding those in public office accountable. Very often people forget that although they may be in the majority in one part of the country, they may not be in other parts. Politicians engage in payback. When someone comes to power, he compensates people for what they lost in the past. Ethnic differences are compounded by religious differences. Going forward, fighting corruption should involve churches. We are all brothers and sisters—*Encyclical Fratelli Tutti* emphasizes how to create dignity among people. If people don't feel a sense of belonging, it makes corruption issues worse. We need to increase the moral tone of the conversation. Religion is the moral basis for law. We can't address compassion and common citizenship unless it is linked to the notion that we are created in the image of God. People need to be free to change religion. But, in Northern Nigeria, if you think of changing religion, you may be threatened with death. If religion and religious leaders maintain neutrality and keep a moral distance from the state, this will raise the level of trust. Religious leaders need to encourage trust of government. In relation to the needs of Africa, Saudi Arabia is involved, and KAICIID is involved there. In Africa, people think that we are under God's umbrella. Africa has a massive basket of problems that the G20 needs to address. For example, Nigeria has a deceptively large external debt that could threaten its economy. Any kind of debt relief needs to be directed toward meeting the genuine needs of the Nigerian people. In relation to changing economic models, what is most critical is that we need to make sure that we are not forced to import things we don't need. We need more focus on agriculture. African governments must focus on producing what they consume, as opposed to consuming that which they don't produce. We are familiar with Europe and America, but we need more communication in Africa. Given global realities, without being insular, groups should develop mechanisms for solving their own problems. The more you have input from citizens, the greater is the opportunity to make journeys together.

**Ms. Ruth Messinger** emphasized how the Bishop's speech was an eloquent description of government and some of the issues that have arisen. We need to improve the moral tone—that is the critical point. What is the relationship of faith-based institutions to the government?. Often, it is easier to focus on people who are hurting, offering services to the poor, or those who are vulnerable for gender or sexual orientation. When you have neglected things, and something really serious goes awry, we don't have enough situations for FBO's to hold governments accountable. Another issue is that the mobilization of resources tends not to be equitable. We also need to single out governments that are good models of being open and accountable, that have responded well to the COVID pandemic, etc. The United States is an example of how bad things can be. Faith-based institutions should strengthen each other and not retreat into our own bubbles. We need to commit ourselves and our followers to advocacy, to being whistle blowers, and to identifying inequities. What should we do to influence the election? What we can do as faith institutions in advocating for governments that are accountable? We have reason to believe that faith leaders should hold governments more accountable. Our job in the midst of the

pandemic is to find ways to hold governments accountable and rebuild trust with people. These are things we want to do as a broad-based international community. This is not all hopeless. Part of our job is to improve the moral tone, and give people a greater sense of hope and still be very practical. Prayer, ritual, holiday celebration is part of activism. I have spent a lot of time over the past months. The first practical thing to do is to vote. In every country, with every faith, there is a better world that we need to bring about, but it doesn't come by itself, and there are things we can do to take steps to greater accountability. There are ways to urge people to engage in earthly and spiritual worlds, and to give concrete steps that can be taken. Governments can be pressured to give out all the steps. The G20 needs to be urged to be more accountable and to work collaboratively with faith groups. Corruption should also be an ongoing concern.

**Mr. Somboon (Moo) Chungprampree** After the Second World War, there was a period of time when governments had to become stronger. Government is also the nation-state. Someone said that religious groups could be useful and harmful. Same is true of government. How we can build up and build back stronger at the level of the local community? We need local community organizations and civil society. They can then play roles of serving as a check-and-balance force on government. We need to build back international mechanisms. During a crisis, it's not clear how much the United Nations can do. Bilateral relations may be all we can do. Global institutions need to help to support government at the state level. We need stronger civil society institutions. Thailand is one of the first countries to have COVID after China. The Head of Buddhists issued a letter to 42,000 temples to open up kitchens to serve needy. For the poor—this kind of distribution was extremely important. Among the Buddhist communities in the region, they have the network.<sup>28</sup> We need to use the networks that are already established to address real problems. Religious leaders should work to bring local, state, and international levels together. These three levels need to work together.

**Dr. Tamader Al-Rammah** Sometimes religious leaders are heard more than government. The relation between religious leaders and government is important to assure minimization of marginalization and discrimination. Religious leaders need to translate values into practical measures such as working on community projects and working with international organizations. Government accountability and transparency is crucial. We will have a huge challenge with every crisis. We need to identify problems within countries and not wait until problems are too big to handle. Some groups have claimed that COVID is God's punishment. Because of many vulnerable groups are not connected to government processes, they look for other explanations that they can understand. Unfortunately, they accept these explanations. I believe that religious leaders have a major role to reach out to these groups, and mobilize help to these groups.

**Prof. Juan G. Navarro Florio** In a Latin American setting, corruption is very important. The presence of religions should help avoid corruption. Religions need to avoid corruption internal to themselves. For this issue, the presence of religion is very important at this moment. One tool is to have some kind of advisory council where religious voices can be heard. Many years ago, when I was part of the government, we created an advisory council from various religious traditions. We have very good experience with ecumenical dialogue. Another level is dialogue between religion and the state. The place for discussion of politics is in the Congress. Other areas of dialogue could be useful. The presence of religious voices is important—we need not only health of the body, but we also need to meet spiritual needs. I think that G20 by providing religion a seat at the table is very important. Religious sectors are important in society. This is why the Interfaith Forum needs to be a formal part of the process. Religions offer perspective

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<sup>28</sup> For more on this story, see <https://www.buddhistdoor.net/news/buddhist-temples-become-soup-kitchens-across-thailand>

including the idea of universal human dignity. The *Encyclical Fratelli tutti* reminds us of our common human dignity. This document is important for the future of our discussions. The pandemic shows that life is fragile. All of us need to work. Religion plays a very important role in offering people hope. This emergency has helped us see the needs.

### **SUPPORTING VULNERABLE GROUPS IN TIMES OF COVID-19**

**Description:** Vulnerability as a central focus for the Forum reflects concern for segments of populations suffer particularly acute effects of disasters and social challenges. In the context of COVID-19 emergency, women, children, the elderly, the disabled, and some minority communities experience distinctive and severe challenges. Their vulnerability is closely connected to economic, emotional, social, or health disparities. Religious communities and actors have strong ethical teachings that focus on vulnerable people and during the crisis many have responded with vigour and creativity. This panel will focus on lessons learned and possible implications for rebuilding in the post-COVID era. Moderated by Mr. James Patton (President, CEO of the International Center for Religion and Diplomacy), speakers were Dr. Mohammed Elsanousi (Executive Director of the Network of the Traditional and Religious Peacemakers), H.E. Amb. Teresa Indjein (Director General for International Cultural Relations of the Federal Ministry for European and International Affairs, Austria), Rev. Victor Kazanjian (Executive Director of United Religions Initiative), Ms. Sara Rahim (Head of Programme at A Common Word Among the Youth and Youth Representative to the United Nations for Parliament of the World's Religions), Dr. Mohammad Sammak (Secretary-General of the National Committee for Christian-Muslim Dialogue in Lebanon and member of KAICIID Board of Directors), Prof. Mariz Tadros (Director of the Coalition for Religious Equality and Inclusive Development and Research Fellow at the Institute of Development Studies, United Kingdom), and Ms. Maria Lucia Uribe (Director of Arigatou International in Geneva).

#### **Presentations Overview:**

**Mr. James Patton** described how different religious actors have reimagined a global community that elevates every one of us but they have not always been received by governments. Many have been killed. How do we reimagine life in response to this pandemic or will fear and danger pit us against us more fervently against one another. Will there be a rise in authoritarian politics? What is the role of faith groups in leading efforts to change. With 8 in 10 being believers, how do they already lead the way? Today we have an exceptional panel of practitioners and colleagues who seek to address this issue. He encouraged people to submit questions in the chat function and he introduced each speaker. how can religious leaders find common ground with policy makers to support vulnerable groups? Vulnerability is itself a tricky concept that is bounded by context and can contribute to barring people from empowerment by categorizing groups into powerless preconceptions. When we take a deficit approach we fall into the trap on occasion of looking at things in terms of what is broken rather than looking for places where people have agency that we can emphasize and bring to the fore. This is also a time for religious communities to reconsider ways in which religion has been a force for isolation and separation from the community, turning us inward. This is a perennial challenge for faith and one we should try to unpack the profound points that have been raised. The religious and the artistic can remind us of how wide beyond the boundaries of our awareness things are. In relation to the coalition for inclusivity rather than coalition for religious freedom, I agree that it is the rights regime that needs to be protected.

**Dr. Mohammad Sammak** [there were a lot of technological breaks in this presentation] Thank you for the introduction to this subject. To start, it is worth noticing that there is a gap in service



delivery. Religious leaders work to win the battle of human fraternity. As St. Paul put it, to the pure all things are pure. But no one is pure. Political leaders are of two kinds. Populists who are guided by their own view of what is good. Beliefs are harder to shake than knowledge and nothing is more firmly believed than that which is least known. Vulnerable peoples are put in between. Political and religious leaders both suffer from the same notion that they can do it alone without cooperating with the other. Our experiences have taught us that vulnerable people are best served if both religious and political leaders work together side by side for the common good. This has happened in different parts of the world both before and during the pandemic. By playing the role of coordinator whether we look at ourselves through religious texts or the UN charter, the deep fact is that we humans are one family. KAICIID's strategy is based on this notion that we are one family. Is this possible? KAICIID says yes. KAICIID did this successfully before and is prepared to do it again. This is what the custodian of the holy mosques wanted us to do from the very beginning. Lebanon has experienced protests and civil unrest in addition to bombings, but there is also a robust interfaith effort there. The history of this religious cooperation helps provide a pathway forward amidst these many difficulties. Lebanon is unique in the middle east. We have 18 religious communities that are living together. The way we face this pandemic was in a cooperative way. The pandemic came at a politically and economically and socially difficult time. Religious leaders is the only place in the Middle East where religious leaders work together to assist and help those in need during this pandemic. They work together to close churches and mosques in order to avoid pandemic spread. They took their decisions to protect people.

**Dr. Mohammed Elsanousi** we have a responsibility to protect vulnerable communities during this pandemic. Religious actors can positively contribute to preventing spread of virus and serve as source of reliable information. Religious actors are well positioned to communicate information and teach communities during a crisis. Through this added value governments have sought to collaborate with religious leaders to provide services. In Somalia, people don't have access to correct information disseminated by governments. In many instances, religious leaders have more influence in communities than national governments. With international financial support and partners, we were able to disseminate information to communities so that they can get correct information that they need. The national Muslim COVID-19 response committee in Kenya also worked with government and religious communities to address similar issues. They have more than 30 organizations and institutions in collaboration each one complimentary to the other. The committee has taken an interreligious approach. The committee while mostly comprised of Muslim also includes approaches transferable to other faith practices. The minister of health in Kenya has encouraged the Christian community to use guidelines developed by the committee when convening their gatherings. Since the onset of the pandemic, the committee has considered religion to be a key actor by the government for curbing spread of virus. In addition to promoting government messaging, promoting contextual theology when communicating to faith communities in relation to safety measures and hygiene practices to prevent spread. Youth played a major role in this collaboration. And women of faith as well. They are well positioned to function in a time of crisis as resilient community actors. Another example comes from southeast Asia where youth mobilize actors to counter false misinformation and fake news. And intergenerational campaign to promote interfaith values to provide information related to the pandemic. Civil society and faith based organizations integrate moral lessons into the current circumstances. Multilateral institutions address hate speech and misinformation in southeast Asia. These few examples illustrate SDG 18 which calls for partnerships across society and no one should be left behind. We have to have courage to reach those who are vulnerable. You have to reach out to them during a crisis. The UN told us you can't go to kilometre 5 because it is a dangerous place. I said I need the courage to go there. When I got there, there were 35 Imams

there waiting for me. There were dead bodies and they needed help to bury them. That courage to reach out to vulnerable people is critical. Second, we talked a lot about religion. I want to also mention that custom and tradition is critical. Vulnerable people have their own beautiful customs and traditions that have to be taken into consideration.

**H.E. Amb. Teresa Indjein** expressed gratitude and KAICIID team. We are in a time of crisis. A health crisis and an economic crisis. This puts public actors under pressure in the context of climate change. Challenges that we try to respond to. So much suffering, pain and hope. Many activities have slowed or come to a halt. This means in a way that there is time to reflect, look inward, reconsider, reshape and become aware of what really matters. Now is a time to reimagine how we want to look closely at our values and see if they correspond to present needs. In *Encyclical Fratelli tutti*, the Holy Father Francis warns against radical individualism, society of exclusion and carelessness. We hear from him the eternal call for brotherly and sisterly love a culture of dialogue and compassion. Some bitterly smile but the road the most courageous have taken is tenderness. He invites us to go despite suffering and pain. This crisis forces us to do things differently. At the core is a notion of vulnerability. At the core of my professional life are intercultural relations and the arts. I share the following, in Austria, the cultural dimension and awareness of what the arts contribute to the fabric of life is high. They are more than decoration. They are essential for creating consciousness. Religion, philosophy and the arts in paradise could be one. They touch the essence of our being. They help shape our reality. The current pandemic has a crushing effect on the arts sector and intercultural relations. Postponed or canceled activities, arts groups forced to close their doors, and they move to a digital response. But how do we move forward. Regional and local and national governments have responded. EU” has launched creative platform for initiatives. Friendly relations with the world require that we adapt. So we adapt digitally but the need for face to face performances remain. Culture is at the heart of progress. It can play a key role in the crisis. In Austria there is a process to give even more weight to culture so artists can make clear how we want to live tomorrow. Their connection with others can lead to results that infuse hope. A successful platform repairing the future in Austria is a national effort for the challenges are being collected with view of putting them into practice. We want to go international with this initiative. Secondly, a different kind of vulnerability exists in relation to digitalization. The pandemic has accelerated digitization. Cultural life of online entertainment but online behavior may differ from our behavior in the real world. It is also under surveillance. It can be manipulated by AI and personalized addictive offer. People turn to media for information. It is a new behavioral behavior that increases distrust in institutions or polarizes opinions. This affects the underlying structures and values. We need a new digitized humanism that ensures that our digitized world and new technology like artificial intelligence puts the human dignity in the center. It is imperative to avoid degrading human being to a manipulated resource. The arts are essential in dealing with digitized humanism. This all takes us back to the question; which image of the human do we embrace? Which relation to mother earth? Religions can give us guidance and the arts enrich our lives. It is the soul that enriches human beings and guides us through time. How can art and culture help us move forward to envision what we can become in the future? If we feel that what helps us get through life is the notion that something around us helps take care of us whether longing for the other or longing for something intact despite our suffering in this world, religion can provide for that. But the arts can also have this function. If you like the music of Bach your life is different after you have heard the music than it was before. If our life is to fall in love with it, the arts help us. In Austria, art helps us introspect to get in touch with something beyond ourselves. I had a friend in Auschwitz who said that music helped him get through the toughest of time. The arts can be like light. Science always takes us toward new discoveries. Creativity is also endless. As a consolation, art is soothing.

Science and art come together in the fields of sustainable architecture. Scientists inspire artists and vice versa.

**Ms. Sara Rahim** talked about how young people have been impacted by COVID 19. I am humbled to be speaking with you and speaking on behalf of ACWAY. I hope to share how young have been impacted and discuss opportunities for collaboration. Since adoption of SDG our government has included youth to achieve stable societies and address climate change, economic instability, gender inequality, conflict and migration. Today our economy includes 2.4 billion 16% of global population. Challenges remain with access to education. COVID has widened the already existing education gap affecting youth, women and people with disabilities. Over 75% of those surveyed experienced school closures and not all have been able to transition into online schooling. This highlights the digital divide. Access to stable employment for youth has increased. Pandemic has increased this. People in lower income countries are most exposed to reduction in working hours. Over ¼ of young people experience religious restrictions. Climate of fear, intolerance and disconnection have impacted youth. Youth remain committed to stepping up and partnering with social institutions actively engaging in volunteerism and donating to COVID response. They work from home when possible. First recommendation is the incorporation of the interfaith development goals developed by ACWAY. They are intended to complement to address the gap where religious leaders contribute to SDG implementation. Two in particular are IDG 4 intergenerational engagement. Encourage youth to become civically engaged to support cross cultural understanding. IDG 6 access to religious literacy and interfaith education. We need to educate across faith and culture during a time when fear is a pandemic. We need to create experiences that promote knowledge of the religious other. Recommendations often are based on practitioner knowledge but how effective can they be if they do not involve young people? Develop policies that integrate young people social protection, employment for youth, online training for youth, stronger mental health resources and investing in partnerships that combat climate change. We challenge you to focus attention toward increasing youth participation to yield more sustainable programs that have intergenerational support. When asked to address how freedom of movement abased on COVID have impacted youth, the first thing we can agree upon is that these are unprecedented times. COVID has impacted how we think of religious freedom. How do you protect civil liberties while also protecting public health? How do you find the balance? Who decides? The young people I am hearing say we are in a space of transition. Places where they would socialize are not accessible. How are we defining community for young people and are we creating access to those communities to young people? I attend a mosque and we pivoted to a digital format. But there is a large digital divide so that is not the case for all. So, how are we addressing digital divides? Youth are convening WhatsApp and Zoom meetings to maintain a sense of community. There needs to be more attention to this for young people who do not have the right to access in the safety of their own home.

**Prof. Mariz Tadros** addressed religious marginalization and how different vulnerabilities are intersecting during the COVID crisis. We know that COVID-19 is religion blind – you don't have to have faith and still be affected by COVID. No one can claim immunity to COVID, but unfortunately the responses to COVID have not been religion blind. Where we have intersecting vulnerabilities where they are poor and excluded by geographical marginalization, there is a sobering situation. The intention is not to create a hierarchy of suffering. Women have suffered from domestic violence, poor people in scatters have lost livelihoods, and there has been mass suffering even across the middle class that has impacted religious capital – intersecting vulnerabilities is not to create a hierarchy but it is to say that the situation is serious for society at large. Hate speech in Pakistan towards the Shias blaming them for returning from Iraq called it the 'Shia virus.' This impacted Shias working in hospitals told don't come to work. People were

put in quarantine into inhumane conditions almost reached a point to become unbearable. Hate speech is not a national phenomenon. Based on rumors and stereotypes, it circulates to become a global phenomenon. Because it is locally affected but global, we need a global response. A government official that was propagating hate speech, we asked them to stop circulating this. We took immediate action and there is power in the collective. We were successful but it took a bit of time. Are we willing to speak up to people whose faith is not our own? Are we willing to stand up to them? We also know hate speech spills across borders. When there is hate speech in India or in Pakistan, it spreads across the borders. The hate speech in India became so problematic it became violent and affected their livelihoods. People don't want to buy from them or let their children into schools. They call COVID the 'Jihadi virus'. We have documented how when you belong to minorities you come from a despised class you are seen as dirty and lacking in cleanliness. What we see in many contexts is that they are laid off in the service sector. That impacts their whole family. Chilling sense of any group as unclean or source of dirt is important. Also, the COVID response pointed out that it did not create these dynamics. The crisis amplified them. The more isolated you are, the less likely you are to have access to resources and accurate information to represent your faith. In Uganda, the government invited faith leaders to the negotiating table immediately but small religious groups like indigenous groups were not invited. This is a time to rethink inclusion/exclusion. We have been uncomfortable about religious disaggregated data but this is a point where we have to be careful. If we are dispersing information and not asking the question of reaching religiously marginalized groups we will accentuate inequality and marginalization. Consistency is important. Trust between arts and policy makers religion and government. Trust is important. Consistency is important for trust so that things are evenly and fairly applied so no single group feels scapegoated. This is a time to build back better in recognition of: hate speech, attend to religious minorities, and pay attention to regional spillover – there is a ripple effect beyond and our collective responsibilities. It is very complicated because historically as far back as the middle ages, the Jews were held responsible for the plague. Pogroms wiped out communities thinking that if you eliminate these communities, you eliminate the virus. We do see clear points of mobilization by political and religious leaders. We need to look where people are seeking to establish legitimacy through dehumanization of others in a context where this is pre-existing dehumanization. Governments should take action against government officials should they tweet hateful statements about religious minorities such as President Trump. There is an appetite for these types of things. How do we bring it down again. Accountability is important. People know that their account will be suspended if they malign and stigmatize any group on social media. The speed with which we respond is important. Things move from hate speech to violence quickly. Faith leaders need to respond quickly to say these are rumours, we can't buy into this. Things circulate quickly. We need to be able to understand and take it seriously that people come up with excuses 'it's not that bad,' 'but everybody's suffering,' 'give it time.' These excuses make people be unwilling to take it seriously and see it not just as a threat for those stigmatized but also for the community as a whole. Everybody is affected. It is not just about protecting the community but also about protecting who we are. Stopping hate speech needs to be more powerful. It is not just about a group defending itself but about the effectiveness of the community's reaction. Our organization's local partners in Pakistan said we are concerned about what officials are saying about minorities (they should be beheaded). We immediately wrote them and said we are watching you. They immediately removed their hate speech. Not as quickly as we wanted but we hope that they now are aware that we are watching them. It took them 48 hours. We are a coalition for equality and inclusive development not a coalition for religious freedom to bring in principles of inclusivity in relation to poverty, gender, youth. On purpose.

**Ms. Maria Lucia Uribe** addressed going from vulnerabilities to empowerment of religious communities during a time when the pandemic compounds the situation. Thinking of people as valuable can be tricky because it makes us take a deficit approach that labels vulnerabilities in a vulnerable category. Vulnerability is not static or absolute. Putting people in categories in a vulnerability framework might impact their capacity to cope with the challenges they go through. We should focus on the conditions that can strengthen their response. So am centering my comments on children. From the beginning children were made invisible. We were told they were not highly affected by the pandemic. Later they were identified as vectors and schools were shut down leaving children in 188 countries out of school with long term impacts on their future. This impact is invisible in policy responses. Children are affected by the pandemic emotionally spiritually and physically. So there are 3 ways children are valuable. We need to understand the systematic way the pandemic impacts interacting with chronic diseases against the background of inequalities. UNICEF estimates that the ongoing crisis can increase the number of children in poverty to 170 million by end of this year with an addition of 1.2 million could die in next six months due to changes. Closing of schools affects meal provision affecting food security. Evidence shows household food insecurity also affects child development, mental health, infectious diseases in children, etc. Evidence shows that people from religious communities and ethnic groups are discriminated against and disproportionately affected by virus. The pandemic exacerbates the impacts. Moving to resilience and empowerment with young people can help children see themselves as part of the solution not the problem. To connect with one another and strengthen connections. Create spaces to participate and raise their voice during a time when civic space has shrunk. Help them voice the future they want to see. Focus on the spiritual well-being of children. Spirituality contributes to strengthen people's resilience and is critical response to negative impact of virus. The pandemic has shown importance of citizen empowerment. The unprecedented closing of schools make it more valuable to address cyber bullying and exposure to hate speech. Children's navigation of internet exposes them to this. We need to empower them to deal empathy with one another and expand their opportunities to participation. Focus on interdependence and interconnected. We have never seen before how important it is to break through the silos to address the long term impacts of COVID-19. Our religious traditions emphasize interconnections. We know epidemics create fear. To change the discourse we need to create more space for people of diverse backgrounds to come together dialogue and collaborate. We need to develop interventions where youth take leadership and develop strategies to challenge view of powerless to empowered. Religious communities are essential to this community based approach for affirming the dignity of those at the margins to the center to shape this new normal. This is needed to develop moral imagination for our societies to affirm the wellbeing of children around the world. Thank you. I believe that the point is that more than a billion children are out of school and most of the children out of school do not have access to the internet so they are totally cut off from education. Add to this the violence at homes. This impacts health. Schools are protective places for children where they receive meals, they can share their feelings, and at times where they feel safer than at home. Children also experience bullying and corporal punishment in school. But looking forward, the emphasis should be on a community approach. Education is disconnected from the community safety nets that surround children. We saw that the teachers have to walk miles to reach one child to bring them materials to do homework. Alternatives include radio programmes, the use of WhatsApp groups, etc. we need to rethink how education can continue for children who are cut off. How education connects to community and the role communities can play. We need to demand governments to do something but the telecommunication companies have an important role to play. They have an ethical responsibility to provide access to children for education. We need to

focus education toward the socioemotional well-being of children not just exams to develop projects in the community.

**Rev. Victor Kazanjian** offered insights into what some local grassroots faith leaders are doing to provide solution and a way forward that addresses some of these problems. COVID has revealed pervasive injustices that continue to exist. As our panelists have emphasized, this also presents us with opportunities to emphasize we are all one, collaboration with different sectors, call for compassion and tenderness, promotion of young leaders to be an inclusive movement, intersecting vulnerabilities and the suffering of those who are marginalized, hate speech and the impact of children and building resilience. The devastation caused by the pandemic, wars, gender injustice, democracy itself and the earth has put a spotlight on our structures of what does and does not work in the lives of human beings. Ordinary people lie buried in a mountain of statistics in the way that the pandemic is presented. People become dehumanized. I have the privilege of calling to mind the faces, the particular individual people, the indigenous persons, the children and those who are poor – calling to mind those faces – people we know who are particularly vulnerable and expressing what they are feeling and rehumanize this dehumanizing moment. So many people who are struggling with the disruption of their lives and the devastation of this illness. For those of us whose behaviors emerge from spiritual principles – part of our work is to constantly rehumanize this dehumanizing situation. Bring to life and to mind the experiences of people living in cities and urban areas. The wisdom that emerges from grassroots communities is what we need to hear and incorporate and it is often what is left out. Caring for everyday lives of people – the ways people deliver food, watch out for those who slip into places of crisis – those ways in which communities form a micro network in which care is given in part through assistance but also in part through informal leadership that is emerging from the grassroots. The formal structures are crucial in creating good policy and we often focus on formal leaders, it is often the informal systems that are operating powerfully that kick in during moments like this when there is paralysis in other parts of society. How we support those and get out of the structural systems and look at how we can resource people in our communities at the local level is what we are challenged to do and what many of the groups in the faith sector are particularly oriented towards. That allows us to put into existence on the ground grassroots action and return to the core that the pandemic is teaching us something about interconnectedness and the perceived separation of our lives being an illusion. For people of faith this is particularly important. We also need to consider how religion has been cultivated as separating forces in our lives. They are also forces of justice and peace. Religions when they claim truth in ways that create borders and are not open to connections is revealed as well. The pandemic reveals brokenness in society. This is at time for religious groups to take stock of our own religious communities as well to become deeply connected. There is a simple exercise I use with folks. When I am with people, we try not to bring institutions together to resolve theological conflicts. We bring different cultures together to address issues in the community. People are in a circle and a box is in the center with different pictures on each side. A few rules come into play. You can't move the box and you can't move to a different chair. How do we know what problem that is presented by the box? The only way we can construct an understanding of the box is if we talk to those around us and together construct what the box looks like and communicates a problem that needs to be resolved. It is crucial for us to realize that each of us are valuable but also partial in our knowledge. Without a collective construction of understanding of what the problem is we cannot develop a collective approach to addressing it. In individualistic cultures we tend to think we are complete. We need each other. Diversity becomes an essential resource for engaging these problems and for solving these issues. That is where we start. We need each other. We are incomplete and partial by ourselves. This draws us into collaborative approaches

for peacebuilding and development. We do not bring institutions together to reconcile but bring human beings together to resolve these issues.

## **EDUCATION THAT SUPPORTS PEACE, RELIGIOUS LITERACY, AND CULTURAL DIVERSITY**

**Description:** The values focus of education, that includes inclusion and religious literacy, takes on increasing importance in the COVID-19 era. A priority is to address school systems that present manipulative discourses and narratives portraying religions, cultures, cosmogonies and/or worldviews as antagonistic and irreconcilable. Religious inclusiveness and non-discrimination in education are priorities for policy makers as well as religious communities. Promoting critical thinking and positive images of the “other” in school curricula is a key tool for conflict prevention and promoting social cohesion. Moderated by Prof. Patrice Brodeur (Senior Advisor at the International Dialogue Centre), speakers were Dr. Mohammad Abdelfadeel (Lecturer at the University of Al-Azhar, Egypt; KAICIID Fellow), Dr. Fahad bin Sultan Al-Sultan (Executive Director of Salam for Cultural Communication in The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia), Prof Thomas Banchoff (Vice President for Global Engagement at Georgetown University, USA), Rev. Prof. Fadi Daou (Chairperson and CEO of Adyan Foundation), Amb. David Fernandez Puyana (Permanent Observer at the United Nations University for Peace to the United Nations in Geneva), Dr. Scherto Gill (Research Fellow at the Guerrand-Hermès Foundation for Peace and Visiting Fellow at the School of Education, University of Sussex, United Kingdom), Dr. Samia Huq (Associate Professor and Interim Dean, School of Humanities and Social Science at BRACU University, Dhaka, Bangladesh), and Prof. Priyankar Upadhaya (UNESCO Chair for Peace and Intercultural Understanding at Banaras Hindu University, India).

### **Presentations Overview:**

**Prof. Patrice Brodeur**

**Dr. Mohammad Abdelfadeel**

**Dr. Fahad bin Sultan Al-Sultan**

**Prof Thomas Banchoff**

**Rev. Prof. Fadi Daou**

**Amb. David Fernandez Puyana**

**Dr. Scherto Gill**

**Dr. Samia Huq**

**Prof. Priyankar Upadhaya**

## **ADDRESSING THE NEEDS OF REFUGEES AND MIGRANTS AND ADVANCING SOLUTIONS, WITH A FOCUS ON WOMEN AND YOUTH**

**Description:** Never in history has the world seen more people displaced than today. Two far-ranging global compacts, one for refugees and one for migrants, reflect commitments by states to action that promotes more inclusive and humane policies and active efforts to seek resolution to conflicts that drive forced migration. Trends, however, point towards weakening responsibilities towards people seeking refuge and urgently needed support for humanitarian needs. Religious actors are central to this agenda-setting process that makes it possible to address the needs of refugees and migrants and facilitate holistic responses to a central challenge of our times. Religious actors can provide practical and spiritual support and guidance on the path towards solutions. Moderated by Dr. Aleksandra Djuric Milovanovic (Project Manager of Network for Dialogue; KAICIID Fellow), speakers were Sheikh Mohamad Abou Zeid (Senior Judge at the Family Court of Saida in Lebanon), Ms. Anoud AlOfaysan (Alumna of Salam for Cultural Communication in The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia), Ms. Esther Lehmann-Sow (Global Director Faith and Development at World Vision International), Prof. Paolo Naso (Universita La Sapienza, Rome, or Maristella Tsamatropoulou, Caritas Greece), Prof. Erin Wilson (Associate Professor of Global Politics and Religion and Vice Dean and Director of Education at University of Groningen, Netherlands), and Dr. Pritpal Kaur Ahluwalia (Education Director at the Sikh Coalition and Co-President at Religions for Peace).

### **Presentations Overview:**

**Dr. Aleksandra Djuric Milovanovic**

**Sheikh Mohamad Abou Zeid**

**Ms. Anoud AlOfaysan**

**Ms. Esther Lehmann-Sow**

**Prof. Paolo Naso**

**Prof. Erin Wilson**

**Dr. Pritpal Kaur Ahluwalia**



## **INEQUALITY: GENDER, RACISM, AND STRUCTURAL DISCRIMINATION**

**Description:** Inequality, of opportunity and of perceptions of what is fair and what is not, are central issues that global policy makers need to address. That includes religious leaders and communities, both as prophetic voices seeking action and accountability, and in addressing inequalities within their own communities. This panel discussion frames the issues around human dignity and notions of fairness, including obstacles and opportunities for economic and social participation. How do differing traditions reflect and apply cultural and religious norms? How can religious communities contribute to healing with respect to patterns of racial discrimination and reversing structural injustice? With respect to gender, women's equality is a central issue, from wage gaps, exclusion from political processes, and undue burdens of caring. How can religious communities contribute more to empowering women, especially when traditional cultural norms often perpetuate inequality including in many religious institutions and practices. Moderated by Dr. Nawal Alhawsawi (Marriage and Family Therapist and Mental Health Counsellor; KAICIID Fellow), speakers were H.E. Adama Dieng (Former UN Special Adviser of the Secretary-General on the Prevention of Genocide), Dr. Ganoune Diop (Director of Public Affairs and Religious Liberty at the Seventh-day Adventist Church, Maryland, USA), Ms. Audrey Kitagawa (Chair of the Board of the Parliament of the World's Religions), Imam Yahya Pallavicini (President of the Comunità Religiosa Islamica Italiana in Italy), Ms. Asha Ramgobin (Director of Human Rights Development Initiative, South Africa), Ms. Lisa Winther (Senior Human Rights Advisor at the Stefanusalliansen, Norway), and Mr. Peter Prove (Director of International Affairs at World Council of Churches).

### **Presentations Overview:**

**Dr. Nawal Alhawsawi**

**H.E. Adama Dieng**

**Dr. Ganoune Diop**

**Ms. Audrey Kitagawa**

**Imam Yahya Pallavicini**

**Ms. Asha Ramgobin**

**Ms. Lisa Winther**

**Mr. Peter Prove**

## **ECOLOGICAL CHALLENGES: RAINFOREST PROTECTION AND PURPOSEFUL ACTION TO PROTECT THE ENVIRONMENT**

**Description:** Environmental degradation, corrupt practices, encroachment on indigenous lands and rainforests, and other human rights violations present grave challenges around the globe. Most faith and indigenous communities embrace an ethical and spiritual responsibility to protect the environment including rainforests. Their advocacy and promotion of sustainable management should be heard and heeded. Faith and indigenous communities drive urgent actions in many places that promise to restore degraded forests and increase afforestation and reforestation. Their commitments point to sustainable solutions in line with international standards and local development priorities in the effected environments. The panel discussion will build on the Interfaith Rainforest Initiative launched in June 2017 at the Nobel Peace Center in Oslo, Norway and on other faith-initiated efforts along similar lines. Moderated by Prof. Lara Hanna-Wakim (Vice-Director of the Higher Center for Research, Holy Spirit University of Kaslik, Lebanon), speakers were Dr. Iyad Abumoghli (Director of the Faith for Earth Initiative and Principal Policy Advisor at United Nations Environment Programme), Prof. Pablo Canziani (Professor of Environmental Science at the National Technological University, Regional College Buenos Aires, Argentina, and member of the Commission “Justice and Peace” of the Catholic Church in Argentina), Rt. Rev. Yoshinobu Miyake (Chair of the Board at the International Shinto Studies Association), Ms. Marylita Poma (Communications Officer, Interfaith Rainforest Initiative in Peru), Dr. Hayu Prabowo (Director of Siaga Bumi; Chair of the Council of Ulama’s environment and natural resources body; representative of Religions for Peace), Mr. Elias Szczytnicki (Secretary General and Regional Director of Religions for Peace, Latin America and the Caribbean), and Sri Swami Svatmananda (Director of the Sacred Divine Wisdom; KAICIID Fellow).

### **Presentations Overview:**

**Prof. Lara Hanna-Wakim**

**Dr. Iyad Abumoghli**

**Prof. Pablo Canziani**

**Rt. Rev. Yoshinobu Miyake**

**Ms. Marylita Poma**

**Dr. Hayu Prabowo**

**Mr. Elias Szczytnicki Sri Swami Svatmananda**

## **PRACTICAL PARTNERSHIPS TO ADDRESS CLIMATE CHANGE AND ITS CONSEQUENCES**

**Description:** Religious communities are responding to calls for action to address moral challenges from the local to the global level. To advance global commitments to protect our planet, new coalitions need to be formed and strengthened to facilitate practical partnerships among faith leaders, indigenous communities, and other sectors (such as government, business and civil society). Enhancing partnerships and access to financial and technical support is essential for many communities to realize their priorities and invest in appropriate responses. Moderated by Dr. Brian J. Adams (Director of the Centre for Interfaith and Cultural Dialogue at Griffith University, Australia), speakers were Chief Rabbi Itzhak Dayan (Chief Rabbi of the Jewish Community in Geneva), Prof. Auwal Farouk Abdussalam (Associate Professor at the Department of Geography at the Kaduna State University, Nigeria; KAICIID Fellow), Ms. Kiran Bali, MBE, JP (Chair of the URI Global Council of Trustees), Dr. Thomas Lawo (Senior Advisor at the German Society for International Cooperation and PaRD Secretariat), and Dr. Amanah Nurish (Member of the Indonesian Consortium for Religious Studies; KAICIID Fellow).

### **Presentations Overview:**

**Dr. Brian J. Adams**

**Chief Rabbi Itzhak Dayan**

**Prof. Auwal Farouk Abdussalam**

**Ms. Kiran Bali, MBE, JP**

**Dr. Thomas Lawo**

**Dr. Amanah Nurish**

## **THE RULE OF LAW, HUMAN RIGHTS AND RELIGIOUS RIGHTS**

**Description:** The rule of law, human rights, and religion are conceptually interlinked. Efforts to promote social justice, freedom of religion, and religious pluralism require that we develop strategic thought and leadership approaches that take into account the complex ways in which religious liberty rights interact with other fundamental rights enshrined in the International Convention on Human Rights. Laws and policies need to reflect the understanding that the right of free exercise of religion protects all religious beliefs and communities, including the non-religious ones; this requires respect for religious plurality and equality principles, and has to be balanced against other liberty and equality rights where they are in conflict. Moderated by Amb. Alvaro Albacete (Deputy Secretary General at The International Dialogue Centre), speakers were Mr. Claudio Gregorio Epelman (Executive Director of the Latin American Jewish Congress), Dr. Elizabeta Kitanovic (Executive Secretary for Human Rights at the Conference of European Churches), Prof. Susanna Mancini (Professor at the Department of Legal Studies at the University of Bologna, Italy), Prof. Javier Martinez-Torron (Professor at Complutense University and Royal Academy of Jurisprudence and Legislation, Section on Law and Religion and Canon Law, Spain), Prof. Michael O’Flaherty (Director of the EU” Agency for Fundamental Rights), and Dr. Abdi Zenebe (Senior Advisor to the Minister at the Ministry of Peace in Ethiopia).

### **Presentations Overview:**

**Amb. Alvaro Albacete**

**Mr. Claudio Gregorio Epelman**

**Dr. Elizabeta Kitanovic**

**Prof. Susanna Mancini**

**Prof. Javier Martinez-Torron**

**Prof. Michael O’Flaherty**

**Dr. Abdi Zenebe**

## ANNEX

### COLLABORATING INSTITUTIONS

- A Common Word Among Youth (ACWAY), UK
- African Consortium for Law and Religion Studies
- Alianza de Iglesias Presbiterianas y Reformadas de América Latina
- Amity Institute of Advanced Legal Studies, New Delhi, India
- Berkley Center for Religion, Peace & World Affairs, Georgetown University, USA
- Brunel Law and Religion Research Group, UK
- Canadian Multifaith Federation
- Càritas – Secretariado para América Latina y el Caribe de la Pastoral Social
- Center for Research and Training in Interfaith Relations, Morocco
- Centre for Interfaith & Cultural Dialogue, Griffith University, Australia
- Centro de Diálogo Intercultural Alba, Argentina
- Christian Aid
- Comisión de Pastoral Social Conferencia Episcopal, Argentina
- Comisión Nacional Justicia y Paz, Argentina
- Consejo Argentino para la Libertad Religiosa (CALIR), Argentina
- Consorcio Latinoamericano de Libertad Religiosa
- Department of Law and Religion, Complutense University, Spain
- European Academy of Religion
- Europees Centrum voor Religiestudies
- Faculty of Protestant Theology and Religious Studies, Brussels
- Foundation for Religious Science, John XIII
- German Society for International Cooperation
- Globethics.net
- Guerrand-Hermès Foundation for Peace
- Institute for Policy, Advocacy, and Governance, Bangladesh
- Instituto Argentino Jacques Maritain
- Instituto para el Diálogo Interreligioso, Argentina
- International Association for the Defense of Religious Liberty
- International Consortium for Law and Religion Studies, Milan, Italy
- International Center for Law and Religion Studies, Brigham Young University, USA
- International Centre Religion, Law and Economy in the Mediterranean Area (REDESM)
- International Partnership on Religion and Sustainable Development (PaRD)
- International Religious Liberty Association
- International Shinto Foundation
- Islamic Relief USA
- KAICIID Centre for Interreligious and Intercultural Dialogue
- Ma'din Academy, India
- Max Planck Institute for Social Anthropology, Halle, Germany
- NALSAR – National Academy of Legal Studies and Research, University of Law, Hyderabad, India
- National Committee for Interreligious and Intercultural Dialogue in The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia
- Oslo Coalition on Freedom of Religion or Belief, Norwegian Centre for Human Rights
- Oxford Society of Law and Religion, UK

- Peres Academic Center
- Programa Internacional sobre Democracia, Sociedad y Nuevas Economías de la Universidad de Buenos Aires, Argentina
- Project Ploughshares
- Purdue University Fort Wayne
- Regents College, Oxford University, UK
- Religions for Peace
- Research Infrastructure on Religious Studies
- Research Centre, Religion, Law and Economy in the Mediterranean Area, Insubria University, Como, Italy
- Ridd Institute for Religion and Global Policy, University of Winnipeg, Canada
- Royal Academy of Jurisprudence and Legislation-Section on Law and Religion and Canon Law, Spain
- Sant'Edigio Community, Italy
- United Nations Alliance of Civilizations
- United Nations Development Programme
- United Religions Initiative
- World Faiths Development Dialogue
- World Communion of Reformed Churches
- World Jewish Congress
- Worldwide Support for Development