H.E. Rev. Kjell Magne Bondevik, Executive Chair of the Oslo Center & Former Prime Minister of Norway

@BondevikKM @oslocenter

Believers understand each other and have much in common across different religions. We can learn to live peacefully with our differences, but we should focus more on our common values: The idea of #HumanDignity, the idea of peace, justice, and respect for the holy. All major religions teach peace between people.

The challenge is to create inclusive societies where all groups have influence. Democracy is about how you treat the minorities. Let us promote religion as the source of reconciliation and peace in order to create inclusive societies.

Dr. Agnes Abuom, Central Committee of the World Council of Churches

@Oikoumene

The purpose of this forum is to seek to understand how various religious communities and organizations are empowering women and others.

Dr. Hala Al-Tuwaijri, Head of the Women’s Empowerment Team at G20 Riyadh

@g20org

Countries will not be able to achieve their sustainable development goals without the empowerment and participation of women in all areas. This topic affects all sectors of the G20.

Mr. Ahmad Alhendawi, World Organization of the Scout Movement

@AhmadAlhendawi @worldscouting

When we see the impact that this pandemic is having on young people today, it’s not just severe—it’s catastrophic. It has resulted in a “generation in waiting” and a generation in lockdown. We hear speech that is trying to portray young people as a central part of the problem, but we need to understand the sacrifices they are making. A blame game toward young people is not going to help us win them and engage them.

We believe religious leaders also have a role to play. As we see trends that are not fully constructive toward achieving the 2030 agenda.

This is a youthful work. It’s time to turn to that generation, and the existential crises that young people are facing today matter to them. It’s time to listen to this generation. I look to this convening at large to continue really engaging young people. Religious leaders are always there, increasing the resilience of their communities, and by working with youth we stand a better chance at creating a more inclusive, better “new normal.”

Prof. Ursula Basset, Pontifica Universidad Catolica, Argentina

@BassetUrsula

We must celebrate every woman for what she is—not for conforming to a narrative of choice. We might be breeding new forms of #discrimination if we pick which types of women we like and which types we don’t like, even if those women are professionals. Empowerment means to empower every woman, taking her for what she is.

Chief Rabbi Schlomo Hofmeister, Jewish Community in Vienna, Austria

As much as all of us would agree that equality, dignity, and justice for all human beings are at least theoretically at the core of our religious beliefs, our reality is not meshing with these ideals. True empowerment can only be achieved when those who hold the power are willing to give up pieces of it. It is our utmost responsibility to fearlessly speak out against all forms of nationalism, racism, sexism, ageism, etc. Discrimination is nothing less than a sacrilege.

Dr. Azza Karam, Religions for Peace

@Mansoura1968 of @religions4peace

When we wish to ensure that a narrative of women’s empowerment and gender equality is acted on, multi-religious collaboration can be one of the most effective means of realizing that. When religions come together, that is the moment of greatest boost to any discourse.

As we see the spike in gender-based violence, we also see a remarkable spike in interfaith collaboration centered around protecting and empowering women in this crisis.

Multi-religious collaboration is a tipping point for social cohesion. The G20 Summit will serve the world best when it serves the UN. When it serves multilateralism. We need to be deliberate in ensuring the thrival of that system.

Dr. Mahmoud Mohieldin, UN Envoy for Financing for Development

@UNenvoyMM @UN

If there is inequality or lack of access to financial resources, women and the young suffer more. There is an unprecedented accumulation of debt. Many of us are living in ‘broken boats’ because of discrimination and inequality. When we build back better, we need to build with that in consideration.

Under-Secretary-General Pramila Patten, Representative of the UN Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict

@endrapeinwar

As we take stock, it is clear that the implementation of the #BeijingPlatform for Action is falling beneath its initial promise. With the #COVID pandemic, even the initial gains are at risk of being lost. The virus does not discriminate, but its impact does. The instability and fear that the pandemic engenders is exacerbating human rights concerns. Peace and sustainable development can only be achieved through the inclusion of all groups. In times of great unrest, it is faith-based organizations and religious leaders who bring people together.

Human rights are needed to navigate this crisis. We must give people hope and a vision of what the future can hold.

This is the time for religious leaders to use their moral authority to address gender-based violence, discrimination, and xenophobia.

Aminata Toure, Former Prime Minister of Senegal

70% of the African population is below 35, so we are a very young continent. Faith-based organizations can come to the rescue of multilateralism in this time of Coronavirus. When it comes to young people, how are we going to make sure that our youth are not attracted to extremist attitudes because of poverty, despair, and disenfranchisement? It’s necessary for our networks to knit together and have reality at the ground level.

**PANEL DISCUSSION 07:**

Prof Patrice Brodeur of @KAICIID:

Our theme is challenging at any point in time, ever more so amidst this pandemic. Education takes on increasing importance during #COVID19. Religious inclusiveness and nondescriminatory education, is key for conflict prevention and intercommunal harmony.

Education must aim to decrease ignorance.

Dr. Mohammad Abdel Rahem, University of al-Azhar

We need to find ways to combat misunderstandings of religious text, stand up against hate speech, and reform our educational curriculae.

Dr. Fahad bin Sultan Al-Sultan, Executive Director of Salam for Cultural Communication in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia

@Salam4CC

As you know, the Arab region is in dire need of consolidating the principles of coexistence and inclusion. The problems of discrimination and violence have deeply affected us, so acceptance and tolerance have become a key factor—a necessity. Are educational institutions capable of fulfilling the very important role of helping the younger generation understand inclusion, diversity, and understanding? Is education in schools able to change society? Or does society form the educational system? Right now, schools are the result of the reality we are living. Therefore, our main mission is raising awareness on the policy level.

Religious leaders play a major role in formulating the stereotypical thinking in societies and schools. Though we need major reforms in the structures of the educational system, we need cooperation between educational organizations and civil society. We need more collaboration between diverse organizations for the path to educational success. We cannot fully foster the message of tolerance and coexistence when our students are facing conflicting information.

Prof. Thomas Banchoff, VP for Global Engagement @Georgetown

Even if we improve religious literacy among teachers, the politicization of religion in governments will persist. Every effort in the areas of teacher training and textbook modification will help; however, I plead for the promotion of core teachings in religious texts that emphasize the shared values of humanity.

Rev. Prof. Fadi Daou, Chairperson and CEO of Adyan Foundation

@fdaoulb of @adyanfoundation

We need to advocate more to make cultural and religious literacy an educational right for every child. We need to do more work on the governmental level to ensure that education is free from discrimination. We need to collaborate more on the global level to enable positive intercultural and interreligious experiences. We need to combat fear of other religions in our religious communities.

Amb. David Fernandez Puyana, Permanent Observer at the United Nations University for Peace (UPEACE)

@PuyanaFernandez of @UPEACE

In order to combat the consequences of the divide caused by #COVID19, it is essential to make inclusive education available. We need to break barriers and allow the globalness of education, offering digital opportunities to academics regardless of age, sex, or cultural background.

Dr. Scherto Gill, Guerrand-Hermes Foundation for Peace, School of Education, University of Sussex

@scherto of @SussexUni

During the COVID-19 pandemic, interfaith organizations in many settings have been empowering communities to close the gaps caused by school closures and increasing divisiveness. Education inclusion is more than ensuring access to schooling. It is, above all, the nurturing of the whole child in every aspect. Human diversity is to be celebrated, and the presence of difference in educational environments can enrich them. An interfaith approach tends to demonstrate that embracing inclusion and diversity much be an integral endeavor—not just an add-on.

Dr. Samia Huq, BRACU University, Dhaka, Bangladesh

@BIGD\_BRACU

The question is no longer whether religion should be taught, but HOW it should be taught. There is a critical difference between teaching religion and teaching about religion. This has led experts to ask: Does the teaching of religion need to be detached from belief, or can it be nurtured by it as students learn of other religions? We must transition from teaching for religion to religious literacy.

Currently textbooks have an exclusivist approach to teaching religion, encouraging divisiveness. Teachers are undertrained, and religious studies are de-emphasized.

Educators and religious actors already engaged in such work wi

Prof. Priyankar Upadhaya, UNESCO Chair for Peace and Intercultural Understanding at Banaras Hindu University, India

@bhupro

Whenever we talk about education as transformation, we must look at how the dynamic experiences of society can be inculcated in our own curricula. It is very important for us to not simply mainstream these examples from other religions, but to include them in the smaller informal teaching moments. In all, we need to provide a quality education that caters to today’s job market, but global inclusiveness cannot be forgotten.