

Welcoming the Other

The 9th World Assembly of *Religions for Peace*
November 19, 2013



Women and Youth Religious Leaders Work to Build Peace

Today members of the global networks of religious women and religious youth met in Vienna for pre-Assemblies to begin the work of the 9th World Assembly of *Religions for Peace*. Women and youth leaders addressed their respective network delegates and discussed how their religious communities and networks can counter rising hostilities toward the other.

Each pre-Assembly discussed ways that religious communities can welcome the other by advancing human dignity, shared well-being, and a more robust notion of citizenship.

Dr. Parichart Suwanbubbha, Co-Secretary of *Religions for Peace*, Thailand, asked delegates of the religious women's network, "How can women welcome the other and transform each other by affirming the human dignity of the other?" Ms. Layla Alkhafaji, Director of International Relations at Al Hakim Foundation in Iraq, said that, "Welcoming the other strengthens my own faith."

Lawrence Chong, moderator, *Religions for Peace* Asia & Pacific Interfaith Youth Network, challenged Youth delegates, "*Religions for Peace* Youth both individually and institutionally, need to mobilize in order to make an impact on the world."

Each pre-Assembly then organized into four working groups to formulate recommendations on how to address the commission themes of the 9th World Assembly: conflict prevention and transformation; just and harmonious societies; human development that respects the earth; and religious and multi-religious education.



Delegates Arriving in Vienna

Delegates began arriving today in Vienna for the 9th World Assembly of *Religions for Peace*. The Assembly brings together more than 600 religious leaders representing Baha'i, Buddhist, Christian, Hindu, Indigenous, Jain, Jewish, Muslim, Sikh, Shinto, and Zoroastrian communities. The Assembly theme will address rising hostility toward the "other" worldwide. The Assembly begins tomorrow with a delegates-only Business Meeting at 9 AM and the Opening Ceremony at 10:30 AM.

Syrian Youth Delegate Talks About Welcoming the Other

Manar Bilial, a youth delegate from a village outside of Damascus, Syria, addressed the Youth Pre-Assembly today. In an interview with *Religions for Peace*, Mr. Bilial explains how his own experience living through the conflict in Syria has given Syrians an opportunity to 'welcome the other.' To view the interview, click [here](#).

Interview with Ela Gandhi

Ela Gandhi, Vice President of the South African Inter-Religious Council, an Honorary Co-President of *Religions for Peace*, and granddaughter of Mahatma Gandhi, spoke with *Religions for Peace* about how religion can be a vehicle for change. To view this interview, click [here](#).



Manar Bilial, youth delegate from Syria

Connecting Online at the 9th World Assembly of Religions for Peace

As you are preparing for the Assembly, we encourage you to view the 9th World Assembly's [resources](#), including the Assembly's Theme Paper and Assembly Program, located on the *Religions for Peace* [website](#).

If you are not able to attend the Assembly this year, we encourage you to read the World Assembly Theme Paper to learn about how religious communities can welcome the other by advancing human dignity, shared well-being, and a more robust notion of citizenship.

Also, please follow us on social media to join the conversation about the Assembly:

- Follow [The 9th World Assembly of Religions for Peace](#) Facebook page. Please use the Assembly's official hashtag **#RfPAssembly** if you are posting your own updates.
- Join us on [Twitter](#) and post your thoughts on the Assembly using **#RfPAssembly**.
- Follow us on [Instagram](#) at **rfp_assembly** and post your own photos using the tag **#RfPAssembly**.
- Watch video highlights from the Assembly on our [YouTube](#) channel.
- Read our daily e-newsletters and updates to keep informed about events happening at the Assembly.

We look forward to seeing you in Vienna!