

# Welcoming the Other

The 9<sup>th</sup> World Assembly of *Religions for Peace*  
20 November 2013



## The 9<sup>th</sup> World Assembly Begins

The 9<sup>th</sup> World Assembly of *Religions for Peace* began today, bringing together more than 600 religious leaders representing Baha'i, Buddhist, Christian, Hindu, Indigenous, Jain, Jewish, Muslim, Sikh, Shinto, and Zoroastrian communities. At the Opening Session, members of each faith represented at the Assembly stood onstage and welcomed the delegates and "welcomed the other."

Religious leaders and leaders of international organizations spoke to the Assembly about what it means to "Welcome the Other." Speakers at the Opening Session included H.E Nassir Abdulaziz Al-Nasser, UN High Representative of the Alliance of Civilizations, delivering his own remarks as well as a message from United Nations Secretary General Ban Ki-Moon; Father Miguel Ayuso, delivering a message on behalf of His Holiness Pope Francis; H.E. Faisal bin Abdulrahman bin Muaammar, Secretary General of the KAICIID Dialogue; Honorable Ela Gandhi, Honorary President of *RfP*; and Dr. William F. Vendley, Secretary General of *Religions for Peace*.

In his message, Secretary General Ban said, "I call on religious communities to counter rising hostilities and welcome the other."

Secretary General Muaammar said, "Let us welcome the other. Let us appreciate the other."

In his address, Dr. Vendley stated, "'Welcoming the other' is the antidote to the rising tide of hostility among social groups, including religious communities, that poses a great threat to Peace."

The Opening Session set the tone for the Assembly that will follow, which will focus on "welcoming the other" through advancing human dignity, shared wellbeing, and a more robust notion of citizenship.

# Plenary 1: Welcoming the Other



The first plenary of the Assembly today focused on the larger Assembly Theme “Welcoming the Other.” The plenary’s panel featured Sheikh Abdullah bin Bayyah, President of the Global Center for Renewal and Guidance in Mauritania/Saudi Arabia; Rev. Nichiko Niwano, President of Rissho Kosei-kai and Co-President of *RfP*; Chief Rabbi David Rosen, International Director of Interreligious Affairs of the American Jewish Committee and Co-President of *RfP*; Emmaus Maria Voce, President of Focolare Movement and Co-President of *RfP*; and Dr. Alaa Naseif, Chief of Staff of the KAICIID Dialogue Center.



Dr. Naseif posed the question, “Is the other me, standing here, different from you? Or is the other a part of ourselves?”



Sheikh Bayyah noted, “Without the other, you cannot feel the full humanity. “The other” is part of the I.”



At a press conference after the plenary, several of the panelists affirmed the themes discussed in the plenary. Rabbi Rosen affirmed during the conference that, “To welcome the other is to recognize the divine in and affirm the dignity of “the other.”

## Secretary General's Opening Remarks



*RfP* Secretary General Dr. William Vendley delivered inspirational opening remarks during the Opening Session today. To read his opening address, click [here](#). To watch the video of his opening address, click [here](#).



# Assembly is a Venue to Transform Conflict



The 9<sup>th</sup> World Assembly, in addition to discussing “welcoming the other” in relation to conflict, serves in itself as a venue to transform conflict. This Assembly is an opportunity for diverse religious leaders from zones of conflict to engage with each other in a safe space. This demonstrates the power of multi-religious collaboration to transform conflict.



According to Dr. Vendley, “We are thrilled that our friends from North Korea and South Korea are at the *Religions for Peace* Assembly meeting to speak about shared values.” Dr. Vendley also noted that several religious leaders from Syria are in attendance at the Assembly.

## Commission Meetings Begin

The first meeting of the Assembly Commissions occurred today, bringing together leaders to work on tangible, concrete actions to welcome the other. The four commission themes are conflict prevention and transformation; just and harmonious societies; human development that respects the earth; and religious and interreligious education.

The Assembly Commissions will continue to meet throughout the Assembly, and by the end will present a report that will be shared widely with multiple stakeholders, including religious communities, governments, intergovernmental organizations, civil society and the private sector.



# Connecting Online at the 9<sup>th</sup> World Assembly of Religions for Peace

As you are preparing for the Assembly, we encourage you to view the 9<sup>th</sup> 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 9<sup>th</sup> 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.

