

## **MEDIA RELEASE**

For Immediate Release

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### **GLOBAL RELIGIOUS LEADERS COUNTER RISING HOSTILITY WITH CALL TO “WELCOME THE OTHER”**

**—World Assembly of *Religions for Peace* Calls for Action to  
Eliminate All Forms of Intolerance and Social Hostility —**

**—Historic Meeting of Religious Leaders from Korea, both North and South, at  
*Religions for Peace* World Assembly—**

**(VIENNA, AUSTRIA, NOVEMBER 22, 2013)**— Global religious leaders committed today to work together to resist rising hostility toward the “other” in their declaration: “Welcoming the Other — A Multi-Religious Vision of Peace” ([The Vienna Declaration](#)) (PDF).

“All faith traditions make clear that it is a religious imperative to welcome the other,” said Dr. William F. Vendley, Secretary General of *Religions for Peace*. “This commitment can guide multi-religious action for peace, the antidote to the rising tide of hostility.”

The 9<sup>th</sup> World Assembly of *Religions for Peace* concluded with more than 600 religious leaders and people of faith, representing all historic faith traditions and every region of the world, calling attention to an urgent new threat to peace — rising hostility toward the “other.” The Declaration states, in part:

“Rising hostility, in society and within and among religious communities, takes the form of intolerance, and too often violence. . . . Victims of hostility are often vulnerable populations, including members of ethnic, religious and linguistic minorities; migrants, refugees, asylum seekers, internally displaced and stateless persons . . . . A growing number of governments are placing restrictions on religious beliefs and practices. . . . Sectarian and communal violence is dividing societies, fueling conflict, and destroying innocent lives.”

Religious leaders called on all people of faith to “welcome the other” by preventing violence before it erupts, by advocating for “a more robust notion of citizenship that acknowledges basic human rights, including freedom of religion or belief,” and by advancing human development that respects the earth.

Religious leaders urged religious communities to work together to reverse the rising tide of hostility through multi-religious action. In particular, the Vienna Declaration calls on religious leaders and people of faith to “speak out on behalf of vulnerable individuals and groups”; on governments to “provide legal remedies for victims of intolerance”; and on all sectors of society to work together to “eliminate all forms of intolerance and discrimination by states, by non-state actors, by civil society, by religious groups and leaders, and by individuals.”

# Religions for Peace



In a powerful demonstration of the power of religious communities to welcome the other, religious leaders from both North and South Korea took the stage together at the Closing Session of the World Assembly. To an emotional and extended applause from the audience, they joined hands, bowed, and asked the assembled *Religions for Peace* family to pray and work for peace on the Korean peninsula.

Dr. Jang Jae On, President of the Korean Council of Religionists for Peace (KCR), said, “We will continue to do our best to continue our work to bring peace to all of Korea...Peace in Korea will surely bring peace to the world.”

Archbishop Hyginus Kim Hee-joong, President of the Korean Conference of *Religions for Peace* (KCRP), said, “Although Korea is divided by north and south, in our religious communities we are not divided. We are performing reunification.”

Additional quotes from the Closing Session:



“Religious leaders must move beyond mere tolerance to love.”

“We must allow people to worship God peacefully and without fear.”

“When we embrace and welcome the other with genuine concern and love— as if the other is our very own neighbor and our very self—then we have the foundation for creating lasting peace in the world.”

—**His All Holiness Bartholomew I**, Archbishop of Constantinople, New Rome and Ecumenical Patriarch.

# Religions for Peace

“The theme of this Assembly, welcoming the other, could not be more appropriate and timely than now.”

“We cannot achieve this without partnerships. Religious leaders have to be deliberately engaged.”

“We are going to knock on all doors—looking for peace, looking for co-existence, looking for love,”

—**H.E. Sheikh Shaban Mubajje**, Grand Mufti, Uganda Muslim Supreme Council and Co-Moderator, African Council of Religious Leaders –*Religions for Peace*.

“In this world, different people may have different opinions on different problems. However, our problems are common to all. We share the desire to address them.”

“We need to have a common platform to work on the common problems of all people.”

“By finding bridges of culture and religion, we can reduce conflict.”

—**Dharma Master Most Venerable Sitagu Sayadaw**, Myanmar.

Assembly delegates came from the *Religions for Peace* network of ninety national inter-religious councils and groups, five regional councils, one world council and global networks of religious women and religious youth. Assembly delegates include Baha’i, Buddhist, Christian, Hindu, Indigenous, Jain, Jewish, Muslim, Sikh, Shinto, Taoist and Zoroastrian religious leaders.

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*Religions for Peace*—the world’s largest and most representative multi-religious coalition—advances common action among the world’s religious communities for peace. *Religions for Peace* works to transform violent conflict, advance human development, promote just and harmonious societies, and protect the earth. To learn more, please visit [www.rfp.org](http://www.rfp.org).