

COMMISSION II:

Advancing *Shared Well-Being* by Preventing
and Transforming Violent Conflict

Report from the 10th World Assembly



Religions for Peace 

Commission II Report: Advancing *Shared Well-Being* by Preventing and Transforming Violent Conflict

Building on the commission paper, and reports from the regional consultations and the women and youth pre-assembly, participants in commission II began by identifying the **shared challenges faced by all faiths and regions in preventing and transforming violent conflicts**.

Commission II found that:

- Religious actors often operate in the interface between religion and politics, which has led to abuse of religion for political and personal gain
- In many countries there are gaps in domestic laws with regards to the protection of the rights of minorities, and freedom of religion and belief - while international laws, especially human rights laws and rights of women, are often poorly implemented and enforced
- There is a widespread increase in the proliferation of hate speech, and lack of respect towards minority groups
- In some cases, religious leaders lack the confidence to speak out against social injustice in a strong and unified manner
- The geopolitical and economic interests of super-powers are inciting violent conflict in many regions throughout the world
- The threat of nuclear war is common to all regions, and the abolition of nuclear weapons is an essential element for world peace
- And for a variety of reasons, in many contexts, there is a lack of engagement with young people

The following **means to address the above-mentioned challenges** were identified by the Commission II:

- Development of interfaith educational material and training for religious leaders, especially the youth, to support them in becoming more skilled ambassadors for peace
- The need to equip religious leaders with skills for political engagement and develop greater “political literacy”, in order to prevent them becoming instrumentalised
- Recognizing other faiths, embracing diversity, and building better relationships between other religious and non-religious groups
- Greater multi religious cooperation for enhancing the role of women in peacebuilding processes.
- Greater self-awareness and critical reflection within faith groups about how language is used, and how they talk about other groups
- More concerted efforts to counter hate speech through traditional and social media

The following **existing religious assets** that can be utilized to address the challenges were identified by the Commission II:

- Traditions of peace and reconciliation, and common values and religious principals within different faiths
- Religious gatherings and celebrations, like the Haji, as opportunities to openly discuss challenges and to promote peace

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- Existing institutions, like inter-religious councils, should be replicated in other contexts
- Governmental bodies, like the Ministry of Peace in Nigeria, could be replicated elsewhere
- Religious Learning Institutions, trainings, seminars and fellowships

Based on the shared understanding of the challenges in preventing and transforming violent conflicts and the potential of religious actors to address these challenges **the recommendations of Commission II for the strategic aims and objectives of Religions for Peace** are:

- Establishing inter-faith programmes and mechanisms in contexts where they do not currently exist.
- Establishing multi-stakeholder councils convened by religious leaders bringing together actors from areas such as law enforcement, health, business, education and governance
- Provide a comprehensive training and capacity building for religious leaders on conflict prevention and transformation, and reconciliation
- Establish partnerships with international organizations from outside countries to support conflict resolution/prevention
- Establishing early warning systems for conflict prevention, with special emphasis on the violence against women and role of women in preventing conflicts
- Support active religious communities that live in unity and peace despite their diverse religious orientations
- In case where they do not exist or are weak, petition governments to develop laws on freedom of religious belief and practice, and where they do exist, to enforce them
- Appoint **RfP** national coordinators in each country to bring together religious communities

The recommendations of Commission II for Religions for Peace on the concrete multi-religious action on preventing and transforming conflict are:

- Renewed commitment by religious leaders for action
- Joint advocacy initiatives on multi-religious and multi-stakeholder engagement
- Joint fundraising initiatives between religious institutions and organisations
- More local and regional meetings by **RfP**, as conflicts are more and more localized but with regional impact
- Public acts of forgiveness

The recommendations of Commission II for Religions for Peace for further resources are:

- Media – working with institution-owned media outlets to counter hatred and to preach peace.
- Social Networks – utilizing the network and the social influence of religious leaders to suppress conflict
- Constructive Government Engagement – utilizing the influence, credibility and access of religious leaders to governments to appeal for peace and to become more actively involved in mediating conflicts
- Religious Institutions – encouraging religious institutions to open up to people from different religious backgrounds to model and promote religious harmony
- Providing more safe spaces for interfaith engagement and action

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- A mapping project carried out by *RfP* to identify the needs in different conflict contexts, utilizing existing data and resources such as the Global Peace Index
- Online portal which outlines the existing expertise available within the *RfP* networks which can be called upon in times of crisis and conflict

The recommendations of Commission II for *Religions for Peace* for further partnerships are:

- The Private Sector and businesses
- International agencies and field offices of the UN, AU etc.
- Mapping of organizations with conflict transformation expertise and disseminating this information throughout the *RfP* networks
- Partnering with civil society and human rights organizations