Religions for Peace

MISSION & IMPACT
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.

90+ countries

6 regions

1 World Council

GLOBAL IMPACT

Interfaith Rainforest Initiative
Religions for Peace is a key implementing partner of IRI, an alliance harnessing moral leadership to protect the earth’s resources

Ethics in Action
Religions for Peace is catalyzing action to advance the SDGs through Ethics in Action

Vatican
Advancing a Moral Alliance Among the World’s Religions for an “Integral Ecology”

Global Partnership
H.E. Shaykh Abdallah Bin Bayysh (President, Forum for Promoting Peace in Muslim Societies; Co-Moderator, Religions for Peace) leads collaborative global impact through the organizations’ deep partnership

Myanmar
Religions for Peace as the most high-profile multi-religious specialist promoting peace in Myanmar

Global Assemblies
Overview of Religions for Peace’s ten World Assemblies

Testimonials
Global leaders endorse Religions for Peace

Milestones
Overview of Religions for Peace’s success for nearly 50 years

GLOBAL PARTNERSHIP

关于 Us

页2

里程碑
概览了Religions for Peace近50年的成功

页14

集会
概览了Religions for Peace的十次世界集会

页16

见证
全球领导人支持Religions for Peace

页4

全球伙伴
H.E. Shaykh Abdallah Bin Bayysh（总统，促进穆斯林社区和平论坛；Religions for Peace联合倡导者）通过组织的深入伙伴关系推动全球合作

页8

梵蒂冈
“道德联盟”促进全球宗教间的和平

页12

跨宗教雨林倡议
Religions for Peace是IRI（一个由道德领袖汇集的联盟）的重要合作伙伴，旨在保护地球资源

页10

伦理在行动
Religions for Peace通过行动推进SDGs

页6

缅甸
Religions for Peace作为缅甸最高级别的多宗教专家，推动和平

页90

国家

页6

地区

页1

世界理事会

Religions for Peace—世界上最大、最具代表性的多宗教联盟—推动全世界宗教社区的共同行动，以实现和平。Religions for Peace致力于转变暴力冲突，促进人类发展，推动公正和谐社会，并保护地球。

超过90个国家

6个地区

1个世界理事会

全球影响

跨宗教雨林倡议
Religions for Peace作为IRI（一个由道德领袖汇集的联盟）的重要合作伙伴，致力于保护地球资源

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Religions for Peace

MILESTONES

1970
The first "World Assembly" took place in October 1970 in Kyoto and led to the formal establishment of Religions for Peace as an independent organization. RfPs 10th World Assembly occurs from 20-23 August 2019.

1990-1997
The Religions for Peace Inter-religious Council of Liberia (RfP-IRCL) was founded in 1990 by religious leaders of Liberia drawn from the Christian and Muslim communities. Their effort set the basis for mediation and dialogue which eventually culminated in the ECOWAS Peace Plan for Liberia and the 1997 general elections. President Charles Taylor announced his stepping down through the Council.

1996-1997
Following the Dayton Agreement, the Religions for Peace Inter-religious Council of Bosnia-Hercegovina (IRC-BIH) facilitated communications across religious communities, liaised between religious communities and NGOs working in the post-conflict environment, with founding member Grand Mufti Mustafa Cerić. IRC-BIH remains active today in the protection of Holy Sites.

1991-2000
Civil war breaks out in Sierra Leone and Muslim and Christian leaders form the RfP Inter-religious Council of Sierra Leone (IRC-SL). They mediate between the government and rebels. The Council negotiated the release of 50 child hostages in 1997, and played a key role in the Lomé peace talks. In the following years, IRC-SL conducted a human rights and peace education project to promote dialogue and a Truth and Reconciliation Commission. IRC-SL transformed to respond to the Ebola epidemic in 2014 and remains active today mitigating electoral violence.

2003-2012
Religions for Peace catalyzed interfaith efforts to combat HIV/AIDS and scale up faith-based responses. RfP worked to strengthen faith-based support to people living with HIV/AIDS, particularly in reducing the stigma that surrounds the disease.

2011-2012
Religions for Peace meditated the "standoff" between the executive and legislature on the formation of a permanent electoral council that plunged Haiti into months of political crisis. It brought the parties together and facilitated the signing of the memorandum of understanding on 24 December 2012. Both parties requested that RfP Haiti lead further peace talks.

2012
Religions for Peace launched the "Ten Promises to Our Children," a global initiative to improve child survival. This initiative empowers people of faith to promote life-saving practices, such as breastfeeding and immunizations, in the communities where they live and work.

2011-2012
RfP and Muslims in South Africa’s 10th organization.

2014-2016
RfP's West African IRCs underwent tremendous efforts to combat the deadly Ebola Virus. RfP led quick and effective targeted awareness and sensitization activities to curb the spread of Ebola and save lives. RfP-IRCL partnered with UNICEF to deliver essential services. RfP-IRCL Women of Faith Network responded by providing care, material support, educational access and alternative learning opportunities for those who could not attend school during the outbreak. After the crisis, RfPs IRCs worked to mainstream orphans into society and assist in educating for childhood immunizations.

2014
In 2014, RfP launched the "Faith for Earth" campaign, led by Archbishop Desmond Tutu, in 195 countries and culminated in a petition, signed by 1.8 million people.

2016-present
Launch of the Interfaith Rainforest Initiative, of which RfP is the implementing partner. RfP Latin America and the Caribbean has been instrumental in implementing the project in Colombia and Peru and has also supported a meeting of key stakeholders in Brazil. The African Council of Religious Leaders (ACRL-RfP) and the Inter-religious Council of Indonesia (IRC-Indonesia-RfP) coordinated similar convenings for key stakeholders and potential local partners in both the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Indonesia, respectively. Learn more on page 12.
Senior-most religious leaders from the Religions for Peace’s European Council of Religious Leaders (RfP-ECRL) and the Forum for Promoting Peace in Muslim societies convened in Abu Dhabi, UAE from 8–9 December 2018 to address the influx of MENA migrants to Europe. This meeting collected the wisdom, knowledge and expertise of some of the most senior religious leaders in Europe and MENA to offer guidance on advocacy and action addressing the root causes and effects of migration.

Several key Religious for Peace leaders were graciously hosted by the Forum for Promoting Peace in Muslim Societies for the Alliance of Virtue in 2018. Religions for Peace collaborates at every level, from senior-most religious leaders to grassroots youth of faith, with the world’s most representative coalition of religions in order to advance the goals set at this meeting by H.E. Shaykh Abdallah Bin Bayyah.

Religions for Peace complements the above goals of our partners in our own stated goal of “Advancing Shared Well-Being as a Multi-Religious Vision of Positive Peace.” This notion understands that human beings are relational; a link exists between unfolding personal human dignity & building up the “common good” through care for others.

The Forum and RfP have closely worked together since 2013, not least in the historic Marrakesh Declaration and Alliance of Virtues initiatives of the Forum and multiple initiatives from the RfP side. Here, H.E. Shaykh Abdallah Bin Bayyah addresses RfP leadership and esteemed guests at the 2013 RfP 9th World Assembly in Vienna.

In his address, Dr. Vendley (Secretary General, Religions for Peace) stated:

“(An Alliance of Virtue) can start with religions that bear similarities with one another… but ultimately must extend to all religious believers and people of good will. The bold commitment to the common good needs to be properly expressed, something that H.E. Shaykh Abdallah Bin Bayyah has been advancing with the enthusiastic support of Religions for Peace.”
Religions for Peace has had a presence in Myanmar for years, but more recently set the goal of building the capacity of Religions for Peace-Myanmar (RfP-M) to be the preeminent organization in Myanmar for interfaith dialogue, collaboration and action. As of 2019, RfP has developed a multilevel, multi-stakeholder approach to supporting efforts to end violent conflict, including decades-long conflicts between the military and armed ethnic groups, and the deadly clashes between Rakhine Buddhists and Muslims.

At the diplomatic level, a high-level international delegation was invited to visit the country and deliver the ‘Letter to the Peoples of Myanmar’ carrying a call for the establishment of the Religions for Peace Advisory Forum on National Reconciliation and Peace in Myanmar.

The Advisory Forum brought together senior religious leaders, officials from the United Nations, the Myanmar government and the military, parliament and ethnic organizations. To respond to the critical lack of “open space” for dialogue and cooperation among all stakeholders, this program builds a unique multi-religious and multi-stakeholder mechanism for dialogue and action. The government has publicly acknowledged the critical role religious leaders play in transforming people and conflict and pledged to support future Religions for Peace work on dialogue and multi-religious cooperation.

At the grassroots level, several projects and programs have built the capacity of RfP-M members and supporting dialogue and multi-religious activities have deepened understanding and brought communities back together after violent conflict. Evaluation evidence has shown that the projects have had a profound and positive impact on many participants, especially women, and have helped build peace and reconciliation in the project areas.

Religions for Peace-Myanmar has been recognized as “the most high-profile and visible international specialist interfaith actor” working for peace in the context.1

In response to a growing climate of distrust and fear, Religions for Peace convened a high-level meeting to review and reflect on the power and efficiency of the RfP model to harness the world’s largest preexisting infrastructure and volunteer base – religious communities – as delivery platforms for actions that build the common good. The outcomes of the meeting were an integral part of the preparations for the RfP World Assembly in 2019.

Eighty highly diverse senior religious leaders from all continents, eminent Religions for Peace Trustees, government representatives, foundations and global experts committed to collaborating for the common good attended the meeting, which concluded with a meeting with His Holiness, Pope Francis.

OBJECTIVES

- Advance multi-religious alliance for an “Integral Ecology” for the common good
- Share best practices, challenges and opportunities for multi-religious cooperation to build Peace
- Identify practical means to implement recommended priority multi-religious actions

ON THE LEFT:
Amb. Chibkima Bin Bayyah presents the Marrakesh Declaration on behalf of his father, H.E. Shaykh Abdullah Bin Bayyah [President, Forum for Promoting Peace in Muslim Societies; Co-Moderator, RfP]

Left to right: H.E. Sheikh Shaban Ramadhan Mubaje [Grand Mufti, Uganda Muslim Supreme Council; Co-Moderator, African Council of Religious Leaders-RfP; Rev. Kosho Niwano [President-Designate, Rissho Kosei-Kai; Co-Moderator of Religions for Peace], Rabbi Sir David Rosen [Co-President, Religions for Peace; International Director of Interreligious Affairs, American Jewish Committee], Bhai Sahib Bhai Mohinder Singh, OBE KSG [Chairman, Guru Nanak Nanak Mission; Co-President of RfP and H.E. Dr. Mohamed El Sammak [Secretary General of the Islamic-Christian Dialogue Committee; Co-President, RfP] awaited the arrival of His Holiness, Pope Francis.


H.H. Pope Francis is greeted by Dr. William F. Vendley [Secretary General, RfP].

Left to right: Rev. Kosho Niwano [President-Designate, Rissho Kosei-Kai; Co-Moderator of RfP], Dr. William F. Vendley [Secretary General, RfP], H.E. The Late Cardinal Jean-Louis Pierre Tauran [President Emeritus of the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue; Camerlengo Emeritus of the Holy Roman Church], H.E. John Cardinal Onaiyekan [Co-Moderator, RfP; Archbishop of Abuja, Nigeria] and Dr. Vinu Aram [Director, Shanti Ashram; Co-Moderator, RfP] shared knowledge with RfP leadership and esteemed guests.

H.H. Pope Francis addresses Religions for Peace key leadership and esteemed partners.
ETHICS IN ACTION

Ethics in Action is an initiative predicated on the notion that the grave and urgent challenges facing the world are moral challenges requiring moral solutions. Launched in partnership with the Chancellor of Pontifical Academies of Sciences and Social Sciences, the UN Sustainable Development Solutions Network and the University of Notre Dame, RfP religious leaders convened for eleven meetings between 2016 and 2018 to develop a multi-religious moral consensus and to deploy that consensus as the basis for concrete ethical action. Topics included the rights of indigenous peoples, environmental justice and the refugee crisis.

During these meetings, a significant number of Religions for Peace Co-Presidents and strategic partners convened every three months to discern shared ethical concerns related to the implementation of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals. In that process, they were able to discern substantial and still emergent areas of consensus on a shared notion of the common good. The culmination of this multi-religious notion of Shared Well-Being has resulted in Dr. William F. Vendley’s [Secretary General, RfP] Commission Paper for the Religions for Peace 10th World Assembly, entitled: “Advancing Shared Well-Being as a Multi-Religious Vision of Positive Peace.”

RfP is leading the way in interreligious action for the advancement of the Sustainable Development Goals through the Ethics in Action initiative.

H.E. Dr. Mohamed El Sammak [Secretary General of the Islamic-Christian Dialogue Committee; Co-President, RfP], Dr. William F. Vendley [Secretary General, RfP], Dr. Anantanand Rambachan [Professor of Religion, St. Olaf College; RfP Ethics in Action Member], Rev. Kosho Niwano [President-Designate, Rissho Kosei-Kai; Co-Moderator of RfP]

Left to Right: H.E. John Cardinal Okoyeke [Co-Moderator, RfP; Archbishop of Abuja, Nigeria] and Shaykh Hamza Yusuf Hanson [Co-Founder and President, Zaytuna University]
Religions for Peace is one of the core partners of the Interfaith Rainforest Initiative (IRI), an international, multi-faith alliance that aims to bring moral urgency and spiritual resources to global efforts to end tropical deforestation. It is a platform for faith-based leaders and communities to work hand-in-hand with indigenous peoples, governments, civil society and businesses to protect rainforests and safeguard those that serve as their guardians.

Religions for Peace Latin America and the Caribbean has been instrumental in implementing the project in Colombia and Peru and has also supported a meeting of key stakeholders in Brazil.

ACRL-RfP and the Interreligious Council of Indonesia (IRC Indonesia-RfP) coordinated similar convenings for key stakeholders and potential local partners in both the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Indonesia, respectively.

ABOVE: Bishop Gunnar Stålsett [Honorary President, Religions for Peace; Advisor Interfaith Rainforest Initiative, Bishop Emeritus, Church of Norway] attended the Vatican Conference entitled “International Conference on Religions and Sustainable Development Goals” in order to introduce the Interfaith Rainforest Initiative to H.H. Pope Francis and other senior religious leaders. He noted:

“Working towards the fulfillment of the Sustainable Development Goals is also a spiritual exercise and a moral imperative. It is a widely shared affirmation of faith that we – all persons – are created equal in God’s image, and all share responsibility for God’s creation.”

Laura Vargas [Executive Secretary of Religions for Peace Peru; Country Coordinator, Interfaith Rainforest Initiative in Peru]

“We are at a turning point. This is a dramatic moment in history and we all have to realize that climate change and environmental protection cannot wait any longer. Different religions are getting involved because this task is just as important as the principles of our faith and our daily religious activities. I believe, in fact, that protection of the environment – God’s creation – is itself a religious activity and thus an obligation for all of us.”

ON THE LEFT: IRI is an alliance where religious leaders can work hand-in-hand with indigenous leaders to protect natural and spiritual gifts and resources.

ABOVE: President of Peru, Martín Vizcarra, joins Elias Szczytnicki [Secretary General, Religions for Peace Latin America and the Caribbean (RfP-LAC)] during the regional consultation in preparation for the 10th World Assembly. RfP-LAC has been instrumental in implementing IRI in Peru and Colombia.
WORLD ASSEMBLIES

Every 5–7 years, Religions for Peace convenes a World Assembly of senior-most religious leaders for the purpose of forging a deep moral consensus on contemporary challenges, electing a new World Council and advancing multi-religious action across and beyond the Religions for Peace network. The Religions for Peace World Assemblies are global in scale, multi-stakeholder in composition and action-oriented. The Assemblies convene senior religious leaders from around the world who are strategically positioned to advance multi-religious action for the common good. They also include representatives of governments, intergovernmental organizations, charitable foundations and other civil society sectors and provide concrete opportunities to forge multi-stakeholder partnerships for the common good.

Advancing Peace through Disarmament, Development and Human Rights

CONTEXT
Escalating Cold War rivalry and the worsening war in Vietnam

SELECTED OUTCOMES
- Called for an immediate ceasefire
- Dispatched a multi-religious fact-finding mission to Vietnam
- Established a legal NGO at the UN
- Pioneered the UN NGO Committee on Disarmament

World Religions, World Peace

CONTEXT
The Cold War; the threat of nuclear annihilation dominates the global order

SELECTED OUTCOMES
- Started Vietnamese Boat People’s Project and continued work for Disarmament
- Established first of six regional multi-religious bodies

Religion in the Struggle for World Community

CONTEXT
The Cold War; the USSR’s invasion of Afghanistan, the Iranian revolution

SELECTED OUTCOMES
- Welcomed Chinese religious leaders to join Religions for Peace
- Organized delegations to Washington, Moscow and Beijing to advocate for nuclear disarmament

Religions for Human Dignity and World Peace

CONTEXT
Cold War continues and former colonies struggle for inclusive governance

SELECTED OUTCOMES
- Orchestrated Religions for Peace South Africa multi-religious efforts to end apartheid
- Mobilized the Religions for Peace International Youth Committee

Building Peace Through Trust

CONTEXT
Vast accelerated military spending related to the Cold War (Star Wars)

SELECTED OUTCOMES
- Built confidence through inter-religious liaison among Soviet, European and US religious leaders
- World Summit of Religious Leaders for Children in support of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child
- Introduced global action partnership with UNICEF

Healing the World: Religions for Peace

CONTEXT
Cold War ending; civil wars in many parts of the world, including former Yugoslavia

SELECTED OUTCOMES
- Established Inter-religious Council (IRC) of Bosnia and Herzegovina-RP for reconciliation
- Empowered IRC Serbia Leoce-RP in efforts to mediate the civil war, participate in the formal peace talks and advance reconciliation
- IRC Liberia-RP helps to mediate the civil war, reverses the resignation of Charles Taylor and advances reconciliation

Action for Common Living

CONTEXT
Cold War has ended; a short period of unipolar American hegemony; peace dividends anticipated; HIV/AIDS pandemic

SELECTED OUTCOMES
- Advanced conflict resolution in 15 states
- Convened Pan African religious leaders on HIV/AIDS in partnership with the UN
- Advanced “For African Children” program in 10 African states with major NGOs; 180 million US dollars is raised for services linked to Religions for Peace multi-religious religious structures

Confronting Violence and Advancing Shared Security

CONTEXT
9/11; invasion of Afghanistan and Iraq; growing threats of terrorism; North Korea conducts first nuclear test

SELECTED OUTCOMES
- Track II negotiations are initiated among representatives of Iraq, Israel and Palestine, North and South Korea, Sudan and Sri Lanka
- Launched youth-led global multi-religious campaign “Arms Down”

Welcoming the Other – Advancing Human Dignity, Citizenship and Shared Well-Being

CONTEXT
Violent extremism and rising social hostility

SELECTED OUTCOMES
- Organized programs to counter terrorism
- Partnered with UNHCR and UNICEF on refugees
- Prepared for global climate change campaign for Paris Summit
- “Ethics in Action in the Vatican for SDGs”

Caring for our Common Future – Advancing Shared Well-Being

CONTEXT
Violent conflict and extremism, rising inequality, threats to the earth, crisis of confidence in institutions

SELECTED GOALS
- Facilitate the discernment of a consensus of care on the most serious challenges facing the human family as a foundation for principled multi-religious action
H.E. Koft Annan
Former Secretary-General of the United Nations

“The peace talks have started off well, with the two parties expressing their firm commitment in the peace process and determination to work together to resolve the conflict. Religions for Peace Sierra Leone – played a particularly active role. President Kagba has proposed that the Council whose role has been appreciated by both sides, should become one of the moral guarantors of the peace agreement.”

The Most Rev. Desmond Tutu
President Emeritus of Religions for Peace South Africa

“The World Conference of Religions for Peace played a crucial role in my country’s struggle against apartheid – and it continues to work today, bringing together in more than 50 countries diverse religious leaders and believers who are committed to stopping conflicts and building peace. Religions for Peace recognizes that, historically, religions have often been misused to intensify intolerance and violence in our world. But if religion is part of the problem, it must – and can – be part of the solution.”

Dr. Mohammed Sayed Tantawi
Grand Sheikh Emir of Al-Azhar, speaking at the VII World Assembly of Religions for Peace

“I do not subscribe to the idea of a clash among civilizations. It is incumbent upon all sincere Muslims to cooperate with all other sincere religious believers to contribute in efforts to bring peace, and the welfare of humanity.”

H.E. Ban Ki-moon
Former Secretary General of the United Nations

“Because of the great common ground on which we stand, I commend the continuing commitment of Religions for Peace to strengthen recognition of our common humanity, including through support for global nuclear disarmament. In its new publication, Resource Guide on Nuclear Disarmament for Religious Leaders and Communities, is a welcome step forward on the road to a nuclear weapon-free world.”

H.E. Shaykh Abdullah Bin Bayyah
President of the Forum for Promoting Peace and Co-Moderator of Religions for Peace

“Religions for Peace was a key partner, leading up to and following the convening of several hundred eminent Muslim scholars and diplomats who produced the Marrakesh Declaration. During the proceedings in Marrakesh, 50 senior non-Muslim religious leaders – facilitated by Religions for Peace Secretary General Dr. William Vendley – both observed the Islamic scholars in their deliberations and reflected in separate sessions on their respective religious support for minorities.”

Rabbi Sir David Rosen
International Director of Interreligious Relations, American Jewish Committee

“Religions for Peace as an organization, and the historic Assembly as an inspirational and creative vehicle for such a practical program of shared responsibility and care throughout our globe that will help to achieve what the Jewish mystical tradition calls “repairing our world”, bringing about “the Kingdom of Heaven on Earth.”

Pres. Ahmed Tejan Kabbah
Former President of the Republic of Sierra Leone

“[RFP] did an outstanding job in talking to the various factions, in reasoning with them. They even went to the bush in some cases, sat with them on the floor and socialized with them, and in the process they were able to really educate them on the principles of good living – live and let live. Their contribution to the peace process, in my view, has been immense.”

Ms. Ann Veneman
Former Executive Director of the United Nations Children’s Fund

“Religions for Peace and UNICEF have long partnered for children. Working together, we are committed to ensure that all societies uphold the right and advance the well being of children. In particular, we recognize that religious communities can be unique and irreplaceable agents in protecting and nurturing children. In addition to caring for today’s children, religious communities have the capacity to shape the priorities of future generations to uphold children’s rights.”

H.H. Pope John Paul II
Speaking at the World Conference of Religions for Peace’s 30th Anniversary

“The Roman Catholic Church follows with great interest the work of reconciliation carried out by the World Conference of Religions for Peace in many parts of the world. Faced with the pressing problems of today’s global society, all religious must feel called to fresh efforts to cooperate in order to promote human life and its dignity.”

H.M. King Abdullah II
Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan

“Strengthening the bond between religion and peace is one of the foundations of hope in a better future for humanity. Your organization, which is one of the most prominent institutions of civil society undoubtedly has the will and ability to contribute to this noble cause because it is active, not only on the local and regional levels but also on the international level. Shared religious values are universal by their very nature. Since your organization adopts the moral imperatives that these values entail, the space of its action cannot but be universal, and the time span cannot but cover the entire future of humanity.”

H.H. Pope Francis

“Where there is a need for a common and cooperative effort on the part of the religions in promoting an integral ecology. The Bible helps us in this regard by reminding us of the Creator who saw all that he had made, and it was very good (Gen. 1:31). The religions have the intrinsic vocation to foster a moral consensus that can promote respect for the dignity of the human person and creation is for all. Thanks to God, in various parts of the world we have a number of good examples of the power of interreligious cooperation to oppose violent conflicts, to advance sustainable development, and to protect the earth. Let us continue along this path! We must trust in the Almighty’s help and in the good will of others.”

Pres. Laura Chinchilla Miranda
Former President of Costa Rica

“We need better education and awareness raising campaigns to combat nuclear weapons, nuclear disarmament, and peace studies. In this regard, the action of civil society and faith-based communities is critically important. This is why this gathering to launch the Religions for Peace Regional Network is so important.”