

Meeting Report Standing Commission, IWCC and Women of Faith

Strategic Priority: Advancing Gender Equality

Date: Wednesday, 19 January 2022

Background

On 19 January 2022, the Standing Commission on Advancing Gender Equality, as well as the International Women's Coordinating Committee (IWCC) and representatives of the Women of Faith Networks took place, to share updates, review current work of *Religions for Peace* and way forward, and explore opportunities for collaboration.

Going forward, the first and last quarterly meeting of the IWCC and Women of Faith representatives would be held together with the members of the Standing Commission on Advancing Gender Equality to ensure communication and collaboration as well as streamline ideas and activities under this strategic priority of *Religions for Peace*.

Religions for Peace Updates

- Conference of the World Council of Religious Leaders on Faith and Diplomacy: Generations in Dialogue was successfully convened from 4-7 October 2021 in Lindau, Germany, and virtually.
 - More than 1700 virtual participants and 130 in person attendees.
 - Digital documentation has been created about the Conference and can be accessed [here](#).
- Two Statements were published on behalf the *Religions for Peace* Women of Faith in 2021:
 - On [climate change and urgency to protect the environment](#) during COP 26 (UN Climate Change Conference of the Parties) in Glasgow, UK (October 2021)
 - On overcoming [Violence Against Women](#) during the 16 Days of Activism Against Gender-Based Violence from 25 November till 10 December 2021.
- Jimmy Obuya introduced the Faith for Positive Change for Children, Families and communities (FPCC) initiative and partnership with UNICEF and shared about the opportunities for engaging more Women of Faith Networks through Regional and National Interreligious Councils.
- Upcoming events in 2022 include the following:
 - *Religions for Peace* will host an official parallel event during the 66th Session of CSW (Commission on the Status of Women) on **Multi-Religious Collaboration: The Tipping Point for Engendered Climate Change Policies** scheduled for 15 March at 10:00 am EST.
 - **Registration Link:**
https://religionsforpeace.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_ediQIBjJSDW4ZM4zVxfuZQ
 - *Religions for Peace* together with the United Nations Office on the Prevention of Genocide and Responsibility to Protect and the United Nations Special Rapporteur on Violence against Women, Its Causes and Consequences will co-host a side event during CSW 66 on **Religions and Women's Rights: Principled Engagement and Mutual Accountability**, scheduled for 16 March from 8:30 – 11:30 am EST.

Religions for Peace

- **Registration Link:**
https://religionsforpeace.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_nfZ2iQZWSA6rtPts8B0yHQ
- In collaboration with the City Council of Manresa, a conference is planned for November that will include a focus on the nexus between Faith, Youth and Environment.
- A Gender Analysis and mapping of the *Religions for Peace* Women of Faith Networks will be conducted with a focus on the environment and the Interfaith Rainforest Initiative.

Updates by Members: Key Takeaways and Discussion Highlights

- **H.E. Sima Samar**, *Former Minister of Women's Affairs in Afghanistan; Winner of the Right Livelihoods Award; Former Chairperson of Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission, Afghanistan*
 - Shared updates on the situation in Afghanistan and highlighted the following aspects to take collective action in response to the current situation:
 - The act of gender-based violence by the Taliban must be condemned strongly and in particular the way they are using religion against the women and minorities in Afghanistan.
 - Lobby for justice, as justice is the main ingredient of all the religions to help the rule of law and end the culture of impunity for crimes against humanity and sexual gender-based violence.
 - As the humanitarian situation is very bad and worsening in Afghanistan, lobby for fair distribution of relief to the people and ensure that the inclusion of women who are the most vulnerable and often heading the household.
 - Since quality education is the strongest tool against ignorance, support education projects in the country, in all levels as means for non-violent resistance against violence and discriminations.
 - Fund small projects to empower women, including some income generation for women who are in need of a job. Although it is difficult, they could do some work at their homes to feed their children.
 - And finally, the lessons should be learned from the failure in Afghanistan and not be repeated in another country.
 - During the Conference of Generations in Dialogue on Faith and Diplomacy, a proposal was made to mobilize Muslim leaders globally to speak out on/for women's rights in Afghanistan. What emerged is that many agencies decided to take separate action. These fragmented initiatives have failed to achieve the desired impact. However, *Religions for Peace* is committed to ensuring the global community has access to these religious leaders and assist in a collaborative action.
- **Ms. Sheldia Jano**, *Chair of Women's Network, Interreligious Council of Albania*
 - The faith communities in Albania mobilized resources and partnerships to host refugees from Afghanistan.
 - The Interreligious Council (IRC) of Albania had received an award from the Embassy of Austria for their support of and aid to victims of the earthquake in 2019.
 - The IRC is part of an initiative called 'Leaving the past behind and building resilience for people from Syria', which is linked to their activities aiming at combating violent extremism.

Religions for Peace

- The IRC made a donation of hospital equipment amounting to \$5,000 to support COVID-19 response activities.
- **Ms. Ravinder Kaur Nijjar**, *Chair, Religions for Peace UK Women of Faith Network*
 - Participated in the COP26 events in November 2021, which was an intense two weeks of meetings, lobbying and networking.
 - She hand-delivered the Statement on behalf of the Women of Faith to Prince Charles, a Norwegian Minister and various media outlets where it received coverage.
 - The UK Women of Faith Network participated in the [‘Let Earth Breathe, Plant Trees’](#) project in UK.
 - They have received funding for a Women’s Coordinator within the *Religions for Peace* UK, which is linked to the Women’s Dialogue and Peace project aimed at preventing violence against women and girls. Once the coordinator has been on-boarded a request was made to connect them with *Religions for Peace* International and ensure they can participate in the Quarterly Meetings.
 - The UK Women of Faith Network will be involved in commemorating Platinum Jubilee year for the Queen in celebration of her 70 years of service to others.
- **Ms. Elga Sarapung**, *Chair, Women of Faith Network Indonesia*
 - *Religions for Peace* Asia is involved in campaigning against Human Trafficking which is rampant and prevalent in Philippines, Indonesia and Malaysia.
 - Engaged in a Climate Change project with Asia Pacific Women of Faith Network as well as a Peacebuilding project in Myanmar.
 - Pursuing a project of self-reflection and learning from the experiences of interreligious collaboration in Indonesia which they aim at publishing.
- **Rev. Megumi Wada**, *Director, General Affairs Department, Rissho Kosei-kai, Japan*
 - A new Chair of the Asia Pacific Women of Faith Network was elected during the *Religions for Peace* Asia (ACRP) General Assembly in November 2021.
 - *Religions for Peace* Asia collected \$400,000 to support the people in Myanmar.
 - During the *Religions for Peace* Asia General Assembly a special session was held on Afghanistan to identify opportunities for support and emergency aid.
 - *Religions for Peace* Japan is accommodating some refugee families from Afghanistan, who have fled to Japan.
- **Prof Amany Lubis**, *Rector, Syarif Hidayatullah State Islamic University; Member of Board of Trustees, Forum for Promoting Peace; Member, International Women's Coordinating Committee Indonesia*
 - Shared about the programmes on family security, peace and harmony and the role of women in conflict resolution, which she is leading in her role as Chair of Women, Youth and Family Affairs at the Indonesia Council of Ulama.
 - Reflected on the Abu Dhabi gathering held by the Forum for Promoting Peace in Muslim Societies which focused on the theme of inclusive citizenship.
 - Shared that an Afghanistan-Indonesia Solidarity group has been formed in Indonesia to support humanitarian efforts and refugees fleeing the country.
- **Mr. Humberto Carolo**, *Executive Director, White Ribbon Campaign Canada, MenEngage Network, Canada*
 - Shared insights on the involvement of men and boys and how it can be integrated within the work of the Standing Commission members.
 - The Global MenEngage Alliance is ready to support and be part of the collaboration for any form of intervention in Afghanistan.
 - Emphasised on the need to collaborate more on Faith, Gender Equality, ending all forms of Gender-based Violence and the role of men in promoting gender equity.

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- White Ribbon is commemorating its 30 years of work of advocacy and pledges its commitment to continue to help end Gender-based Violence.
- **Ms. Melody Amal**, *Member, Global Interfaith Youth Network, Argentina*
 - Islamic Institute in Argentina is -
 - Promoting identity and inclusion of Muslim women in Argentina.
 - Commemorating the interventions in Bosnia and Herzegovina to highlight the genocide of Muslim men.
- **Ms. Nageeba Hassan Tegulwa**, *Chair, Women of Faith Network, Uganda; Executive Board member, Interreligious Council of Uganda; National Coordinator Women's Affairs, Uganda Muslim Supreme Council; Member, Religions for Peace International Women's Coordinating Committee, Uganda*
 - IRC Uganda commemorated its 20 years of existence. The Women of Faith Network shared their work.
 - IRC Uganda is building partnerships with cultural leaders to adopt the Ubuntu spirit and the way of dealing with challenges affecting communities.
 - African Council of Religious Leaders-*Religions for Peace (ACRL-RfP)* held its General Assembly and Sr. Agatha Chikelue from Nigeria and Nageeba Hassan Tegulwa were elected as Co-Chairs of the African Women of Faith Network.
 - Ms. Hassan participated in the High-Level Dialogue on Freedom of Religion or Belief (FoRB) sessions on Gender Equality and Inclusion that was organised by *Religions for Peace* with other partners.

Summary and Results

- In her concluding remarks, Prof. Azza Karam, Secretary General of *Religions for Peace*, expressed her appreciation for the work, contribution and dedication of the Standing Commission, the International Women's Coordinating Committee and the Women of Faith Network.
- She invited all members of the Standing Commission to come up with one joint initiative that they would be able to work on together towards gender equality in the course of 2022.
- *Religions for Peace* International will work on mapping and updating the global Women of Faith Network directory. A one-page template will be circulated for members to share their work.
- The Quarterly meetings for the IWCC and Women of Faith representatives will be as follows:
 - Wednesday, 6 April at 9:00 – 10:30 am EST.
 - Wednesday, 6 July at 9:00 – 10:30 am EST.
 - Monday, 17 October at 9:00 – 10:30 am EST.
- The next meeting for members of the Standing Commission is Monday, 17 October at 9:00 – 10:30 am EST.
- Announcement that the contract of Sarah van Bentum, Programmer Officer for Gender and Peacebuilding, will be coming to an end on 28 February, and she will leave her position at *Religions for Peace*.