

Terms of Reference for the *Awards for Excellence in Multi-Religious Collaboration* Deadline for Submissions of Nominations: May 15, 2023

Introduction

Religions for Peace is keen on the long overdue acknowledgement of those who pioneer, and lead, with unparalleled expertise and commitment, often at great cost to self and loved ones, multi-religious collaborative work, in service to all communities. We are delighted to launch the ***Awards for Excellence in Multi-Religious Collaboration*** to honour religious and faith leaders who have demonstrated excellence and leadership in multi-religious collaboration. This will be through an Award Ceremony in New York on 20 September 2023, on the side lines of the 78th United Nations General Assembly.

We will recognise champions of multi-religious collaboration through two awards:

- *Multi-Religious Peacemaker Award* aimed at recognising the stellar leadership of **religious and faith leaders** in advancing multi-religious collaboration for the [Six Strategic Priorities](#) of *Religions for Peace*; and,
- *Women of Excellence in Multi-Religious Action Award*, aimed at highlighting the vital efforts spearheaded by **women of faith** in upholding human rights and dignity, and promoting [Positive Peace](#), security, and sustainable development.

Background

The legacy of [Religions for Peace](#) as the world's oldest, largest, and most representative multi-religious leadership platform for over 50 years, is a testament to the importance and urgency of the **multi-religious imperative** – *i.e.*, the shared responsibility of all religious and faith traditions to work together in serving the common good. It is proven, time again, that when religious and faith communities work together, the collective impact of efforts to uphold human rights and freedoms, advance sustainable development, and build [Positive Peace](#), is more effective, far-reaching, and sustainable.

Moreover, multi-religious collaboration is the proven alternative against any religious fundamentalism or extremism. To work together as equals in the service of the deeply held and widely shared common good, renders it impossible to raise any one religion or belief above the others, or to prioritise any one right above others. Multi-religious collaboration in service to all, is the equaliser of religious ideologies, as all prioritise the common good, and thus serve the Divine Creation.

Religions for Peace's [2020-2025 Strategic Plan](#) advances multi-religious collaboration and action on six strategic priorities, jointly agreed to by representatives of the world's religious institutions and faith communities, as the most urgent challenges the world faces today. These priorities are in full alignment with the United Nations stewarded Agenda 2030 (the Sustainable Development Goals), and are focused on common multi-religious actions to build peaceful, just and inclusive societies, nurture a sustainable environment, champion freedom of thought, conscience and religion or belief, advance women's empowerment and gender equality, cultivate interreligious education, and, throughout, strengthen collaborations and global partnerships.

The work of *Religions for Peace* is guided by the leadership of our [World Council](#) (international governing board), as well as the dedicated service of legally registered, representative, multi-religious affiliated platforms ([Interreligious Councils](#) in over 95 countries and 5 regions), together with grassroots Interfaith Youth Networks (IYNs) and Women of Faith Networks (WoFNs). Serving as champions of the multi-religious imperative, the international secretariat (headquartered in NY) facilitates communication, convening and catalysation of meaningful collaboration across this movement.

For too long, the multi-religious collaborative efforts, and unique skills acquired and served by religious leaders, remain unrecognised, or presumed, and sometimes even maligned. Academics, international development and even other faith-based organisations tend to assume that all development and humanitarian religious work is the same. And it is either understood as all for the good, always, or too much for harm.

Religions for Peace, based on decades of research, advocacy, studies and on the ground programmes, fully acknowledges and respects the value-added and unique contributions of all faith-inspired work for positive peace, not only within the *Religions for Peace* global movement, but throughout the world. As this longstanding 50+ year movement also learns from the many religious and secular development and foreign policy experts, we acknowledge that some religious interpretations, and some actions undertaken in the name of ‘faith’ or ‘religion’ have harmed - and some still perpetuate myriad forms of harm.

Plus, a Focus on Honouring Women of Faith - The *Women of Excellence in Multi-Religious Action Award*

Women of faith are the backbone of all faith communities and religious institutions. In 2000, *Religions for Peace* conducted a study of 300 religious institutions worldwide and concluded that approximately 90% of those delivering services within and through the institutional religious infrastructure of healthcare, education, nutrition, sanitation, and general services, were women. However, the work of these women remains largely obscured or even deliberately unrecognised. By creating this award, *Religions for Peace* aims to recognise and highlight the vital efforts spearheaded by women of faith in service that encompass human rights, peace and security and sustainable development. Furthermore, by collating the initiatives stewarded by women of faith networks across the globe, *Religions for Peace* seeks to document the rich contributions of women to their communities and the world.

The *Women of Excellence in Multi-Religious Action Award* has been made possible by funding from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, Risho Kosei Kai, and GHR Foundation. The Award will be presented at a ceremony in New York on 20 September, at *Religions for Peace* World Council (governing board) global consultations, which will deliberately coincide with the United Nations General Assembly meetings. This is done with the intention to honour the work of the women of faith, as we seek to raise the profile of the awardees, and enable them to find new partners and supporters, and allow others to learn from them.

One Selection Committee – Two Awards

The Awards’ Selection Committee will be composed of co-presidents and honorary presidents serving on the World Council, members of the *Religions for Peace* Standing Commissions, members of the interfaith networks of women and youth, and experienced representatives from partner development and foreign policy entities.

Three religious and faith leaders, from across the *Religions for Peace* global movement, who have demonstrated stellar leadership and excellence in advancing multi-religious collaboration for any of the [Six Strategic Priorities](#) of *Religions for Peace* would be nominated for the *Multi-Religious Peacemaker Award*. These nominated religious and faith leaders will be highlighted through a coordinated media campaign to recognise their leadership and dedicated service. The three awardees – chosen by the Awards’ Selection Committee – will be invited to attend an award ceremony wherein they will be honoured with a special merit plaque for the lifetime achievement award.

For the *Women of Excellence in Multi-Religious Action Award*, the Awards' Selection Committee will nominate one woman of faith or women-led multi-religious initiative from all faith backgrounds, and from each of the following regions: Africa, Asia and the Pacific, Europe, Latin America and the Caribbean, Middle East and North Africa, and North America. These nominated initiatives will be highlighted through a coordinated media campaign to raise the profile of the women of faith and their initiatives. One winner and two runners-up – chosen by the Awards' Selection Committee – will be invited to attend an award ceremony wherein they will receive a cash prize (1st Place = \$7,356; 2nd Place = \$5,000; 3rd place = \$2,500). This award money will be used to scale up the scope of their work. The award will also build the capacities of interreligious networks by providing a platform for nominees to act as trainers for other women of faith and share best practices throughout the *Religions for Peace* movement that consists of over 90 Inter-religious Councils (IRCs)¹ and their Women of Faith Networks and Interfaith Youth Networks that work at the local, national, regional and global levels.

Award Criteria and Process

With the call for nominations for the *Women of Excellence in Multi-Religious Action Award*, *Religions for Peace* welcomes individuals and organisations to nominate women of faith - religious leaders and non-traditional faith actors - and women-led initiatives who have contributed to any of the six Key Strategic Priority Areas of *Religions for Peace* ([Promoting Peaceful, Just and Inclusive Societies](#); [Advancing Gender Equality](#); [Nurturing Sustainable Environment](#); [Championing Freedom of Thought, Conscience and Religion](#); [Strengthening Interreligious Education](#); [Fostering Multi-religious Collaboration and Global Partnerships](#)) through multi-religious collaboration at the local, national, regional and global levels. Nominated women of faith and women-led initiatives must be affiliated with a *Religions for Peace* Interreligious Council, whether regional, national, or subnational. Members of the selection committee are not eligible for nomination for the award. Self-nominations are not accepted.

The launch date for the *Women of Excellence in Multi-Religious Action Award* is set for **23 March 2023**. The submission process is detailed in the attached nomination packet. The final deadline for submission for this first round of awards is, **15 May 2023**.

Evaluation and Selection

- Based on the criteria of initiatives which are multi-religious in content and delivery, and which are designed and delivered collaboratively to strengthen social cohesion, the International Secretariat of *Religions for Peace* will deliver a dossier of shortlists, for each of the two categories, to the Awards' Selection Committee.
- The Awards' Selection Committee members will review the dossiers during their virtual meeting, **in June 2023**, to deliberate on both sets of nominations, and vote to determine the winners of both the *Multi-Religious Peacemaker Award* and the *Women of Excellence in Multi-Religious Action Award*.
- The Awardees will be announced in **August 2023**.

Award Ceremony

The Awards will be presented at a ceremony in New York on **20 September 2023**, timed to be part of World Council (international governing board) consultations, which will coincide with the 78th United Nations General Assembly (UNGA78). Thus, this recognition of champions of the multi-religious imperative, will also honour their stewardship of the *Religions for Peace* global movement, and allow other partners and participants to learn from their knowledge and best practices on catalysing multi-religious collaboration.