



Ministerial Level side-event and panel discussions on
The Civil Society and the Education on Human Rights
as a tool for promoting religious tolerance

UN Headquarters - Conference Room 5 (NLB)
27 September 2012

Chairs' Summary

Victims of human rights violations and day-to-day discriminations have the right to expect that the international community is on their side. This is a perpetual challenge of the United Nations Member States. This concept, stated by the Secretary-General in Geneva, during his address to the Human Rights Council on September 10, has been at center of the event co-chaired today by the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Italy and the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan on the margin of the UN General Assembly in New York.

The many participants, members of governments, members of national parliaments, NGOs' representatives, opinion makers, have debated the key role of civil societies in educating to respect human rights, pacific coexistence and minorities' rights.

To face this challenge the international community must engage in promoting tolerance and religious dialogue through education and the involvement of civil society.

Freedom of Religion and the protection of religious minorities worldwide represent a priority to governments, international organisations and NGOs. The representatives of more than 40 NGOs and Associations from different parts of the world, inspired by different religions and beliefs, made today a strong call for increasing the number of projects focused on education to religious tolerance and promotion of freedom of religion or belief (FORB).

Expectations were voiced that the General Assembly adopt unanimously a resolution on FORB inspired by principles of interreligious dialogue, respect for minorities and acceptance of the peace message in all ethical visions and religious beliefs.

Combating religious hatred that constitutes incitement to discrimination, hostility or violence remains a key challenge that confronts today the international community. The use of religion to achieve political results and violence do not enhance respect for religion or beliefs. Tolerance, dialogue and authentic faith do.

A strong focus on the human rights security dimension has been advocated by the UN senior representatives. The role of civil society in preventing and defusing conflicts caused by religious differences with educational tools was also stressed. The civil society can play a substantial task in neutralising the intolerant message disseminated by fundamentalists through campaigns and projects to teach respect for the views and culture of the others.

Concrete proposals were presented.

1. To the UN membership: At the 66th UNGA, the two resolutions presented by the Organization of the Islamic Cooperation and by the EU were adopted by consensus for the first time. Two approaches that had previously been different have therefore begun to converge. The time is ripe to work on an omnibus resolution, with a view to setting down in an organic and consistent way the basic principles and standards.

2. To the UN system: to define a practical early warning mechanism to detect higher-risk situations conducive to religious or sectarian violence. A further idea could be to create a database to compare the different constitutional and legislative systems – in a non-discriminatory way – in the area of the promotion and protection of Freedom of Religion or Belief.

3. To all NGOs: to include in their mission statement the education of people to tolerance and dialogue, thereby focusing action also on specific programs related to this goal, both inside and outside schools.

4. To civil society: Both media and academia can contribute to promoting tolerance and respect for religious and cultural diversity. Italy could host a seminar to consider the possibility of creating an International Forum focused on these issues.

During the first panel **“The best practices of Governments and Civil Society related to education and training programs as a tool for promotion and guarantee of religious freedom, religious and interfaith dialogue”**, NGO’s representatives, introducing examples of best practices, have drawn attention to the importance of educational and training programs, where spreading the values of tolerance and respect for the religious identity of each person and community has to be always present.

The second panel: **“Current and future challenges to the International Community regarding freedom of religion or belief and the protection of religious minorities”**, experts analyzed the current international situation. Religious freedom is under attack around the world by extremists. The international community has to take up the challenge of how best to protect and promote religious freedom around the world. This task – participants agreed – is particularly important when countries are entering periods of political transition. Religious freedom is a safety valve which allows everyone to feel they can participate constructively in building a new society. The education and training promoted by the civil society in this field is the most important tool that Governments can sustain to this end.

Participants to the High Level segment:

- The Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Italian Republic, H.E. Mr. Giulio Terzi di Sant’Agata;
- The Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, H.E. Mr. Nasser Judeh;
- As key-note speaker, the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, H.E. Ms. Navanethem Pillay;
- As key-note speaker, the Director-General of UNESCO, H.E. Ms. Irina Bokova;
- As key-note speaker, the UN Special Adviser of the Secretary General on the Prevention of Genocide, H.E. Mr. Adama Dieng;
- The Vice Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs of Malta, H.E. Mr. Tonio Borg;
- The Vice Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs of Slovenia, H.E. Mr. Karl Erjavec;

- The Vice Chancellor and Minister for European and International Affairs of Austria, H.E. Mr. Michael Spindelegger;
- The Minister of Foreign Affairs of Morocco, H.E. Mr. Saad-Eddine Al-Othmani;
- The Minister for Foreign and European Affairs of Croatia, Ms. Vesna Pusić;
- The Minister of Foreign Affairs of Cyprus, H.E. Mr. Erato Kozakou-Marcoullis;
- The Head of the Federal Department of Foreign Affairs of Switzerland, H.E. Mr. Didier Burkhalter;
- The Senior Minister of State at the Foreign and Commonwealth Office and Minister for Faith and Communities of the United Kingdom, Rt. Hon Baroness Sayeeda Warsi;
- The Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs of Spain, Mr. Gonzalo De Benito Secades;
- The Under-Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs of Poland, Ms. Grażyna Maria Bernatowicz.

Among the invitees were members of Parliamentary Delegations, the Deputy Permanent Observer for the Holy See to the United Nations, the Permanent Observer for the Sovereign Order of Malta (SMOM), Permanent Observer for the Organization for the Islamic Cooperation (OIC), the US Ambassador at large for International Religious Freedom Suzan Johnson Cook, the French Ambassador at large for Human Rights, Mr. François Zimeray, and representatives of many Permanent Missions to the United Nations.

During the first panel **“The best practices of Governments and Civil Society related to education and training programs as a tool for promotion and guarantee of religious freedom, religious and interfaith dialogue”**, Monica Willard, President of the NGOs’ Religious Committee to the United Nations and Representative of the NGO “United Religions Initiative”, moderated the discussion and underlined the important link between today’s event and the celebrations of the International Day of Peace on September 21st, 2012.

Regional and national programs, initiatives and best practices were presented by the following panelists:

- Jivka Petrova, Adviser on Human Rights and Democracy, External Action Service of the European Union;

- Dr. Deogracious Andrawa Droma, AVSI (“Associazione Volontari per il Servizio Internazionale”).
- Prof. Sarah Sayeed, “Interfaith Center New York”;
- Dr. Jafar Jaward, Al-Hakim Foundation;
- Robert E.A. Borje, Permanent Mission of the Philippines

Remarks were formulated by the following NGOs and Associations:

- “Fondazione Foedus”;
- CO.RE.IS.;
- VIS;
- JUS PRIMI VIRI;
- UN WOMEN-ITALIA.

The second panel **“Current and future challenges to the International Community regarding freedom of religion or belief and the protection of religious minorities”** was moderated by Dr. Pamela Falk (CBS). The following panelists discussed Freedom of Religion or Belief stressing the gaps in implementing the international conventions, underlining the problems of religious minorities, the role of religious actors in rejecting intolerance and the need for diplomacy to develop new mechanisms to integrate the religious dimension into peace efforts;

- Prof. Elizabeth Defeis, (Seton Hall University);
- Dr. Bani Dugal (Baha’i International Community);
- Dr. William F. Vendley (“Religions for Peace”);
- Dr. James Patton (International Center for Religion and Diplomacy).

ANNEX

List of NGOs and Associations invited to the event.

NGOs	PARTICIPANTS	HOME PAGES
Al-Hakim Foundation	Jafar Jawan (PANELIST)	http://alhakimfd.org/
Amnesty International	Nicole Bjerler	http://www.amnesty.it/index.html
Associazione Culturale Eccellenze Italiane	Rossana Pace	http://www.eccellenzeitaliane.it/home.php?lg=it
AVSI	Deogracious Adrawa Droma (PANELIST)	http://www.avsi.org/
AVSI	Ezio Castelli	http://www.avsi.org/
AVSI	Jaqueline Aldrette	http://www.avsi.org/
Baha'i International Community	Bani Dugal (PANELIST)	http://www.bic.org/
Baha'i International Community	Daniel Perell	http://www.bic.org/
B'nai B'rith International	David Michaels	http://www.bnaibrith.org/
Caritas Internationalis	Joseph Cornelius Donnelly	http://www.caritas.org/
CBS	Pamela Falk (MODERATOR Panel 2)	http://www.cbs.com/
CO.RE.IS. (Comunità Religiosa Islamica) italiana	Yahya Pallavicini	http://www.coreis.it/
Comitato Italiano UN- Women	Simone A. Ovar	http://www.unwomen.it/
Committee of Religious NGOs at the UN	Monica Willard (MODERATOR Panel 1)	http://rngos.wordpress.com/
FEZANA Federation of Zoroastrian Associations of North America	Homi D. Gandhi	http://www.fezana.org/
FEZANA Federation of Zoroastrian Associations of North America	Shanaya Deboo	http://www.fezana.org/
FEZANA Federation of Zoroastrian Associations of North America	Pearl Kermani	http://www.fezana.org/
FONDAZIONE FOEDUS	Mario Baccini	http://www.fondazionefoedus.it/
Franciscans International	Mike Lasky	http://www.franciscansinternational.org/

Greek Orthodox Archdiocesan Council of North and South America	Lila Prounis	
Interfaith Center NY	Sarah Sayeed (PANELIST)	http://interfaithcenter.org/
International Center for Religion and Diplomacy	James Patton (PANELIST)	http://icrd.org/
International Religious Freedom Caucus	Stephanie Hammond	http://www.iheu.org/fr/international-religious-freedom-caucus
International Shinto Foundation	Masafumi Nakanishi	http://www.shinto.org/isf/
JUS PRIMI VIRI	Angela Maria Loreto	http://www.iusprimiviri.org/
No Peace without Justice	Alvilda Jablonko Ilwad Elmi Gianluca Eramo	http://www.npwj.org/
NGO Committee on the Spirituality, Values and Global concerns	Sharon Hamilton	http://www.csvgc-ny.org/
NGO Committee on the Spirituality, Values and Global concerns	Anne Hughes	http://www.csvgc-ny.org/
Pax Romana	Joseph Klee	http://www.icmica-miic.org/
Pax Romana	Alejandra Rosero	http://www.icmica-miic.org/
Pax Romana	Grazia Arias	http://www.icmica-miic.org/
Pax Romana	Maya Saoud	http://www.icmica-miic.org/
Pax Romana	Christopher Dekki	http://www.icmica-miic.org/
Religions for Peace	William Vendley (PANELIST)	http://www.religionsforpeace.org/
Rotary Club New York	Giorgio Balestrieri	http://www.nyrotary.org/
Seton Hall University, School of Law	Elizabeth Defeis (PANELIST)	http://law.shu.edu/
Sisters of Charity Federation	Caroljean Willie	http://sisters-of-charity-federation.org/
Soka Gakkai International	Hiro Sakurai	http://www.sgi.org/
The Institute on Religion and Public Policy	Joseph K. Grieboski	http://www.religionandpolicy.org/
The New Seminary for Interfaith Studies	Jay Speights	http://www.new-seminary.com/
The New Seminary for Interfaith Studies	Michael Festa	http://www.new-seminary.com/
Temple of Understanding	J. Kirby	www.templeofunderstanding.org
Unitarian Universalist	Bruce Knotts	http://www.uua.org/
United Religions Initiative	Roger Ross	http://www.uri.org/
United Sikhs	Hardayal Singh	http://unitedsikhs.org/

United Sikhs	Jasminder Kaur	http://unitedsikhs.org/
Universal Peace Federation	Taj Hamad	http://www.upf.org/
Universal Peace Federation	Genie Kagawa	http://www.upf.org/
VIS	Barbara Terenzi	http://www.volint.it/vis/
US Federation for Middle East Peace	Doaa Hammad Sally Kader	www.usfmep.org
Won Buddhism International	Sungee Park	http://www.wonbuddhism.org/
Won Buddhism International	Eunju Nam	http://www.wonbuddhism.org/
Won Buddhism International	Chung Ohun Lee	http://www.wonbuddhism.org/
World Council of Arya Samaj	Florence Kapoor	
World Council of Arya Samaj	Vijay Kapoor	
World Evangelical Alliance	Arie De Pater	http://www.Worldea.org/ric
World Youth Alliance	Elyssa Koren	http://www.wya.net/