



# SUMMARY REPORT

# INTERFAITH SUMMIT

ISTANBUL TURKEY

NOVEMBER 16-18 2015



## G20 INTERFAITH SUMMIT: Religion, Harmony and Sustainable Development



Religious Freedom and the Unleashing of Social Capital  
Religion, Social Cohesion and Economic Factors in Development  
Finding Economic Synergies through Interfaith Cooperation



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## SUMMARY

The *2015 G20 Interfaith Summit* was the second annual parallel meeting to bring together scholars, lawyers, political leaders, faith and interfaith leaders from around the world for three days of discussion and dialogue as a substantial parallel contribution to the gathering of political leaders at the G20 Summit in Antalya, Turkey. The *2015 G20 Interfaith Summit* explored ways that religious actors and communities could work together to enhance harmony and contribute to the achievement of sustainable development goals. Several themes repeatedly emerged:

- How human rights and religious freedom relate to challenges of socioeconomic development (empirical data was often provided from countries to support claims)
- How religious freedom, human rights and interfaith dialogue can be concretely integrated into development issues through several of the Sustainable Development Goals (e.g., Goal 1: No Poverty; Goal 2: Zero Hunger; Goal 4: Quality Education; Goal 5: Gender Equity; Goal 8: Decent Work & Economic Growth; Goal 15: Life on Land; Goal 16: Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions; etc.)
- How instrumentalized religion contributes to unsustainability through the exclusion of metaphysical reasoning from the public domain thereby preventing advance of the moral character, legal reforms and enduring institutions necessary for socioeconomic development to be sustainable
- How good codes of conduct and legal frameworks for relating to other civilizations (e.g., for proselytism, protecting religious heritage, managing multilayered religious sites), particularly in relation to vulnerable populations, might be developed and implemented
- How secularization may be a self-limiting process capable of innovating diverse means for the socioeconomic inclusion, rather than exclusion, of religious minorities
- How the existence of interfaith groups can reduce social hostilities and enable governments and businesses to engage religious traditions without showing religious favoritism of one tradition over another
- How constitutional structures and faith groups can protect societies from violent religion by distinguishing free speech from incitement to immediate violence, and initiating calming responses to de-escalate violent acts
- How religion factors into migration, as both cause and provider of humanitarian response

- How religion should take into consideration population age structure as contributor to social instability and as an important factor for interfaith program development

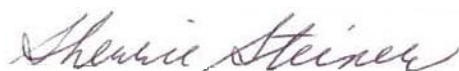
Several issues were repeatedly noted as in need of more dialogue. Attendees were encouraged to strengthen ties with others and initiate cross-disciplinary collaborations with the following priorities in mind:

- Peacebuilding and the Environment
- Climate Change and Development
- Religious Freedom and Interfaith Dialogue
- Human Rights and Religious Rights
- Religion and Gender Equity

Participants in the 2015 meetings well-represented perspectives from monotheistic religious traditions and frequently expressed concerns about religious freedom, human rights, peacebuilding, economic development and interfaith dialogue. Less common were perspectives from non-monotheistic religious traditions addressing concerns about climate change, other global environmental changes and sustainability. Given the G20 interfaith focus on *sustainable* development, some of the questions raised by participants from minor traditions might be worth addressing more directly in future meetings, such as:

- In what ways does too much focus on a solitary God who rules promote uncomfortable relationships with other religious traditions?
- How does the reduction of everything into one contribute to increased poverty, environmental degradation and violence? How can ethics respond?
- In what ways do different religious approaches disturb harmony with the divine, harmony with the self, harmony with others and harmony with the environment?

Respectfully Submitted,



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**Note:** Videos can be accessed at <http://www.g20interfaith.org/content/2015-archive-presentations-english>

## **PRE-CONFERENCE EQUALITY, INCLUSIVENESS AND NON-DISCRIMINATION**

**Description:** In this opening pre-conference plenary session, participants discussed the self-identification of women as Muslim in terms of equality, inclusiveness and non-discrimination. Muslim women's distinctive social location differentiates their struggle for rights from that of western feminism. The Muslim struggle for inclusive justice can build upon the concept of *adah* found in a classical text written in Arabic. Moderated by Jeroen Temperman (Associate Professor of Public International Law, Erasmus University Rotterdam, Netherlands), presenters included Linda Hyökki, Sarosh Arif, and Fadi Zadari (Alliance of Civilizations Institute, Fatih Sultan Mehmet Waqf University, Turkey).

### **Presentations Overview:**

**Linda Hyökki** explained how the self-identification of women as Muslim through the wearing of headscarves, for example, is unproblematic for social relations when the diversity of women's hybrid identities is recognized and respected. Arguing for equal access to the social construction of hybrid-identities, she described a process of social exclusion that occurs when women are monolithically labeled only in terms of their religion. She said, "I would reject the label because otherwise it becomes too easy to exclude me as 'The Other.' If I am seen only as a Muslim, what gets disregarded is that I am also a fan of metal music, a lover of nature and my family stems from eastern Finlandia. All of this defines me, yet at the same time, I am a Muslim. These aspects of myself do not contradict the other aspects." She described Islamophobia as a forced reduction of hybrid identities that fails to recognize other important aspects of people's cultural involvements that strengthen social integration. Problems occur in social relations when self-identification is unidirectional and one-sided. She described women's self-identification as an activist assertion of bi-directional hybrid identities and a quest for social recognition of the commonalities that we all share. "That is what brings us together, so let us be us."

**Sarosh Arif** discussed women's rights as a universal issue that is manifested differently in different social contexts. Rather than conflate women's rights with western feminism, Muslim women should define rights in a way that is better suited to their culture, religion and social context. This approach is consistent with the fundamental feminist tenant that women have the right to self-determination.

**Fadi Zadari** drew on classic Arabic texts from Almalawi to develop concepts, such as *adah*, as a basis for inclusive justice and peaceful co-existence. Classical thinkers were shaped by the cosmopolitan belief that humans were fashioned by God to live together. Although these texts were written a thousand years ago, there is not yet a clear theory as to how the ancient writings contribute to the building of civilizations. People behave differently when they believe they are observed by God even if they are not seen by others. Concepts such as *adah* can be used to develop a model for building interconnected political and religious ethics at various levels of analysis.

### **Discussion:**

It was noted that ancient traditions offer a basis for seeing people from diverse traditions as descendants from common ancestors in ways that recently formed nation states do not. It was also noted that minority women within the western tradition have also identified the need to define their own issues in ways more appropriate to their social location. Sojourner Truth, for example, challenged the presentation of women's rights issues in the United States when she spoke of how she differed from white women and then queried, "And ain't I a woman?"

Discussion ensued around how different Muslim groups juggle their identities. Do immigrant Muslim identities in Finland significantly shift from first generation to second generation? Do they become more integrated with Finnish society over time? What is the difference between 'good' Muslims and 'bad' Muslims in Finnish society? What types of criticisms do Muslim women have of western feminists? How does colonialism play into this? In what ways do women's rights issues get used to justify invasion in Muslim communities? What can be done? Are some of the observed differences between western and Muslim feminism influenced by stages of economic development?

The theoretical development of inclusive justice was discussed in terms of concrete examples of coexistence from the authors' timeframe from where he lived in Iraq. Was there any sharing of a church or mosque where they prayed together?

### **Key Points Made:**

- Women's religious self-identification reflects a quest for social inclusion

- Islamophobia is rooted in the social construction of “The Other” and the disregard of women’s hybrid-identities
- Woman’s rights is a universal concept that is variously manifested in different contexts
- Muslim women should define rights in a way suitable to their situation
- Classic Arabic texts offer cosmopolitan insights that are useful for developing models of inclusive justice that interrelate the religious and the political

## **PARALLEL SESSIONS**

### **RELIGION, HUMAN RIGHTS & DEVELOPMENT**

**Description:** In this opening parallel session, participants presented an overview of the relationship between indigenous religious traditions, human rights and development issues. Moderated by Ana María Célis (Faculty of Law, Pontifical Catholic University of Chile and President, Latin American Consortium for Religious Freedom, Chile), speakers were Cyrus McGoldrick (Alliance of Civilizations Institute, Turkey), Sarah Wood (University of Winnipeg, Canada) and Jasmin Winter (University of Winnipeg, Canada).

#### **Presentations Overview:**

**Cyrus McGoldrick** spoke to the urgency of this historic moment. We live in a time of war. He need to prioritize what we are doing to act in the collective interest of all humanity, based on the spiritual and rational reasoning which motivates each meeting participant. There is a need to talk about how all religions elevate humanity to arrive at a common ethical goal. He then spoke to how Islam provides a foundation for this goal. Diverse Islamic traditions are united by the Qur’an and common prophetic practise. The Islamic caliphate ties the personal to the social teaching that people are here to maintain the world. Although the Caliphate does not teach stewardship, it encourages conservation by forbidding wasteful practices in relation to the use of water, food, money and time. Human rights are foundational in Islam. Even enemies retain basic human rights. Muslims are leaders in peace throughout the region, not just in places where they are victims of aggression. They are looking for authentic movements in which to be activists working for the human rights of all. Islamic culture is looking to their leaders to provide direction, forward vision, mutual respect and collaborative partnerships with existing treaties. Rather than waste time policing individuals about their dress, which the prophet did not worry

about, he spoke about the importance of responding to basic human needs and respecting human rights without violating Islamic tradition.

**Sarah Wood and Jasmin Winter** spoke about the importance of taking indigenous perspectives into account when talking about sustainability. They provided some background on elder's critique of the Canadian policy on multiculturalism as a "Misguided Mosaic" approach. They spoke about the stages of colonization. In the first treaty in 1613, the indigenous response has been a desire to be seen as autonomous equals. The records indicate that a time of cooperation followed this initial treaty. The relationship became paternalistic with the Indian Act of 1876. The Canadian strategy was assimilationist, banning ceremonies and attacking culture particularly with the residential school system. Colonization did not end with the closing of the last residential school. Indigenous people are disadvantaged in multiple ways (e.g., health, education, et.). In 1991, the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples was established to investigate the evolution of the relationship among aboriginal peoples, the Government of Canada, Indian and Northern Affairs Canada and part of the culture of Canada as a whole. Several recommendations were developed to address issues associated with aboriginal status. The Truth and Reconciliation Commission expanded on this process from 2008-2015. The Harper government has been heavily criticized for their record on indigenous rights. Multiculturalism has failed to address the colonial legacy. The idea of a cultural mosaic is a fractured narrative that needs to be deconstructed and entirely reworked. Living together nation-to-nation involves diversity. Deep-set uninformed multiculturalism can result in a colour blind approach that erases cultural practises and understandings.

**Key Points Made:**

- Power-share approaches may be a responsible approach to living with colonialist histories if conceived in broader terms than just financial remuneration
- The complex relations between indigenous peoples and colonizers share common challenges in multiple contexts (e.g., New Zealand, Africa, United States, etc.)
- From an historical perspective, nation states represent a relatively new approach to governing that may continue to evolve in relation to ongoing dialogue



## **YOUNG SCHOLARS – RELIGION, HARMONY & SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT**

**Description:** In this parallel session, which was uniquely conducted by younger scholars, participants presented four diverse case studies that demonstrated the relationship between religion, harmony and sustainable development. This session was moderated by James T. Christie (Professor of Whole World Ecumenism and Dialogue Theology, University of Winnipeg, Canada). James Christie mentioned the interfaith dialogue peace map sponsored by KAICIID, an intergovernmental organization whose mandate is to promote the use of dialogue globally to prevent and resolve conflict, and to enhance understanding and cooperation. As of Jan. 2015, Dr. Patrice Brodeur of University of Montreal reported around 6000 locations where interfaith conversations are occurring around the world. The map can be found at <http://www.kaiciid.org/peacemap>. Presenters for this session were Abbas Panakkal (Director of International Relations, Ma'din Academy, India), Kat Eghdamian (Researcher, University College London, United Kingdom), Eimi Priddis (Lecturer, Zirve University, Turkey), and Colin Colter (Alliance of Civilizations Institute, Fatih Sultan Mehmet Waqf University, Turkey).

### **Presentations Overview:**

**Abbas Panakkal** presented a model of religious freedom and sustainable development from a historic city in India called Malabar, located on the western coast in the area along the Eritrean Sea. This was a strategic area for international trade and commerce. Cargo ships came from Arabia, Greece and China. The Periplus trade route brought diverse sets of people to and through Malabar stimulating significant economic development. It was known as a safe place for minorities. The open mindedness of rulers facilitated social acceptance of these diverse groups. Photos were shown of neighborhoods with churches, synagogues and mosques. Documents from 849 AD indicate interfaith cooperation on matters related to land and worship buildings. Connections were made between interfaith harmony and development attainment. The early settlers never tried to develop a Roman Christianity or Arab Islam in the region. They tried to integrate with the regional culture. The case study of Malabar was further discussed from a historical perspective of religious tolerance and conditions of a de facto pluralism where people are living in a context of interacting with other ideas. Would that apply to Malabar's tolerance because they received people from many regions? If so, how do you apply this to places that do not have de facto pluralism?

**Kat Eghdamian** presented a case study of the role of religion in Syrian humanitarian efforts in relation to religious minorities from Jordan, Turkey and Lebanon in the United Kingdom. She found that responses to displacement is largely framed in secular terms. Humanitarian groups included UNHCR, faith based organizations and non-governmental organizations. Minorities interviewed included Non-Sunni Muslim Syrian refugees (Christian and Druze). Two overarching assumptions went across all (faith and secular) humanitarian efforts: 1) Religion was a non-essential (low or no priority) feature of their humanitarian practice. 2) Where religion did play a role, it was a source of conflict in identity politics because it was emotional, personal and easily incited. Relief organizations adopted an approach of religious disengagement or failure to engage with religion in their practice. Religion as a potentially constructive role was lost in the language and practice of these humanitarian actors. The impact on the Syrian religious minorities was strong. Refugees reported experiences of stigma and discrimination. Five recommendations were offered to increase mutual communication and collaboration between religious groups. In particular, the range of motivations religion can foster in families and communities needs to be incorporated into humanitarian efforts.

**Eimi Priddis** presented anecdotal accounts as an American outsider of economic pressures affecting religious freedom for minorities in southern Turkey. She recounted stories of people changing their religious convictions but continuing to “pass” as Muslims at work in response to economic pressures. She described an incident of a multi-generational Jewish family listing themselves as Muslim on their identity cards to avoid socio economic repercussions of revealing their true religious identity. In some countries, antidiscrimination laws take employment discrimination into account. Further research is needed in Turkey that takes economic pressures into account when studying issues related to religious freedom. Religious self-identification was further discussed in light of increased diversity. How many diverse voices can we listen to before people run out of time or energy to hear that diversity or when the voices conflict with each other or they say they can’t be a part of the dialogue because they don’t recognize some of those voices as legitimate? How do we address that complexity and how does religious self-identification feed into that? Additional examples were offered on the headscarf issue to balance the discussion of anecdotal accounts of minority discrimination in Turkey. In Germany, teachers could teach with the headscarf on. In Finland, people couldn’t get jobs because they had the headscarf on. They were told that ‘our customers wouldn’t like it’. The relationship of economy

and practicing religion does go both ways. Even in Turkey, women have been harassed at work for wearing the headscarf. Alternatively, some women in Turkey refer to “the new headscarf” since they have economic opportunities now that allow them to go into the workplace. Wearing the headscarf becomes a way they balance their ability to work and still maintain their previous standards— to maintain their modesty in public where they interact with many men.

**Colin Colter** presented a case study of how the Waqf operated as a foundation or endowment under the Ottoman Empire in ways that contributed to sustainable development. After a period of persecution, foundation funds were used to provide a range of public goods including provision of drinking water, building construction, and the sponsoring of widows and children. Modern Waqfs are narrowly construed as educational scholarships. Since foundations and endowments secure wealth across generations, long term progress in Turkey might benefit from broadening Waqf investment to support sustainable development. Such an approach would reap political benefits since the delivery of public services are critically important for determining the political legitimacy of an organization. Such an approach is also supported by Islamic teachings. Broadening Waqf investment would strengthen civil society and provide a buffer between citizens and the government.

**Key Points Made:**

- A new historic model of interfaith harmony and economic development, Malabar, was identified in a trade region where the local leadership was open to diversity
- A pattern of humanitarian neglect of religion and minority religious discrimination was identified in a Syrian United Kingdom refugee camp
- Connections need to be made between the mundane and the sacred
- Unequal income distribution contributes to ethical dilemmas and is an important factor for understanding social instability
- Dialogue dynamics may differ depending on the level of engagement; national cultural dialogue may take different forms from community dialogue within concrete contexts
- There is identifiable cultural resistance to the idea of incorporating religious values into financial considerations

## PLENARY SESSIONS

### RELIGION AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

**Description:** The opening plenary for the conference introduced the major topics and set the tone for key issues relating religion to sustainable development. Moderated by W. Cole Durham (President, International Consortium for Law and Religion Studies, Italy), speakers included Katherine Marshall (Berkley Center for Religion, Peace and World Affairs, Georgetown University, USA), Recep Şentürk (Director, Alliance of Civilizations Institute, Turkey), Sharon Eubank (Director of Humanitarian Services, LDS Charities, USA), Brian Grim (President, Religious Freedom and Business Foundation, USA), and Mohamad Hammour (Chair, Guidance Financial Group, France).

**Presentations Overview:** W. Cole Durham spoke about planning the first G20 Interfaith meeting in Brisbane, Australia in 2014. The adoption of the Sustainable Development Goals by the United Nations presented the planning committee with the opportunity to make sustainable development the theme of the 2015 meetings. The aim was to look at each Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) and think about how the religious factor plays into each one. Material things are not the only things involved in development; many development goals won't work unless diverse religious traditions are taken into consideration. This first session focused on the broad theme of sustainable development. Sessions follow which focus on how diverse faith traditions relate to specific sustainability issue such as refugees, peace and sustainable communities, economic development, education, employment, etc. At this point, the panelists began their presentations.

**Katherine Marshall** said we are at a *Kairos Moment*. This term comes from the Greek notion of time and conveys a spiritual imperative that has been invoked at special times in history. It implies urgency, grace and opportunity. People refer to the *Kairos Moment* because of the critical nature of the problems facing the world and the rare opportunity of so many groups coming together with a variety of foci from the Sustainable Development Goals, upcoming Paris COP 21 meetings, the G20 meeting here in Turkey, to the countless meetings on refugee issues and negotiations on Syria, Iraq, Philippines, and Columbia. Part of the challenge is understanding how all of these come together, to disentangle the threads, establish links and discern what can and should be done. Parables were offered to illustrate how religious factors fit

into the diverse array of academic traditions and worldviews that are involved at various levels of engagement (face-to-face, organizational, national, transnational and global). She discussed the governance crisis affecting international development. She identified four important trends as particularly relevant to the Istanbul discussions: 1) The need for new approaches to fragile states, 2) the enormous challenges associated with inequity, 3) divergent models of development, and 4) how human rights and religious freedom relate to the challenges of socioeconomic development. She discussed the importance of integrating discussions about the meaning of religious freedom into development issues and to address concerns about actual and perceived tendencies to instrumentalize religion. The peacebuilding and environmental fields need to develop stronger linkages. Partnerships are needed between people concerned about climate change and development to facilitate dialogue across divergent worldviews. What are good codes of conduct for how proselytism connects to development work? What religious tensions exist in fragile states that might be accentuated by active proselytizing linked to humanitarian and development actions? How does social cohesion link to lively religious marketplaces? What religious issues are involved in the humanitarian crisis? She encouraged the group to emerge from the meetings with a solid list of issues to focus on, to identify vital common goals (e.g., maternal mortality, education), to get a better handle on interfaith engagement, and develop a better understanding of what each other is doing. Evaluation is difficult but the process offers enormous potential for the future.

**Recep Şentürk** began with a story that illustrated how religious values influence behavior. Speaking against the instrumentalization of religion, he identified a double standard that exists in sustainable development circles: The economy justifies everything, but it does not itself need justification whereas religion is justified as good only because it supports sustainable development. He then identified values common to all Abrahamic religions that can provide moral order for coordinating economic activities conducive to sustainable development. Without ethical constraints guiding economic behavior, economic activities cannot occur even if natural resources are abundant. Corruption destroys the possibility of prosperity. Religion is also needed for its intrinsic value, but economic reductionism keeps religion on the margins. *Sustainable* economic development involves values and nonmaterial sources of meaningfulness, but economic reductionism forces people to choose between values or economic development. This is a false dichotomy. Religious metaphysical reasoning provides the humanistic values and

develops the moral behavior constitutive of *sustainable* production and consumption. Only the combination of instrumental and metaphysical reasoning will enable us to overcome the challenges we face.

**Sharon Eubank** identified character as constitutive of sustainable development. Speaking from her experience of miserable places of the world where conflict and perverted religion shattered tolerance, she proposed character as a basic building block for practical application if faith based organizations are going to alleviate suffering and do good in these contexts. *Sustainable* development is not transactional; lasting development is born of the intersection of law, religious faith and tolerance. The nurturance of character provides the moral foundation for people to care as much, if not more, about others as they do for themselves. She discussed conditions in camps she had just visited in Iraq and Kurdistan. At the core of sustainable development, she said, should be to rescue the inner being. She then challenged attendees to ‘walk their talk’ and do something as a consequence of attending these meetings. She described a recent interfaith collaboration that occurred between delegates who met at the *2014 G20 Interfaith Meetings*. On their way home they said, ‘Let’s do something in our own communities together,’ and they did. They began the Interfaith Humanitarian Project and assembled and distributed 10,000 gifts to migrant workers in United Arab Emirates. The biggest effect of the project was how it reduced prejudices among the people involved in preparing and distributing the gifts. “There is no character development without faith,” she said, “and with the collective power of faith, tolerance and the rule of law, we can make the world a finer place.”

**Brian Grim** presented research explaining how religious freedom contributes to sustainable development. He was at the United Nations for the launch of the SDGs, and he met with Facebook founder/director, Bono from U2, and CEOs from a variety of companies to discuss how business can be part of this process, rather than enemies of the process. The UN Secretary-General emphasized *Goal 16: Ensuring Peace*, and the way faith and business can contribute to it. At the 2016 Para-Olympics, his foundation and the United Nations will present global and interfaith peace awards to salute CEO commitments to advancing interfaith understanding and peace worldwide. Find CEOs you can nominate to receive this recognition. In Lebanon, a man who is a Sunni Muslim with a pipe business has Lebanese people from diverse faiths train 400,000 people through the work of his foundation. He is promoting peace and economic

development between people as a business person. Religious freedom aligns with *Goal 5: Gender Equity* as well. Dr. Jo Anne Lyon, General Superintendent of the Wesleyan Church, conducted research demonstrating how religious freedom promotes empowerment for women. Religious freedom is highly correlated with political freedom, freedom of conscience and civil liberties, but gender empowerment is the fourth strongest correlation. In 14% of countries worldwide, girls are discriminated against in education by governmental policies. Data shows that in contexts where there are high governmental restrictions on religious freedom, girls are twice as likely to be discriminated against in education compared to countries where restrictions on religious freedom are low. In contexts where governmental restrictions are high, social restrictions on women are also high. Regarding *SDG Goal 1: End Poverty*, religious freedom sets people of faith free to do the things that drive them to love their neighbor. The giving of alms is built into the faith traditions of faith groups. For Muslims, the median is 77% for people contributing alms for the poor. This represents hundreds of billions of dollars, and is but one example of how faith contributes to ending poverty. But, in the words of a Filipino Cardinal echoing Pope Francis' call, "An economy that excludes, kills." The Mormon faith, where the tradition of self-reliance is strong, has a faith-based program for people empowerment focused on business creation. At St. Mary's University, he is collaborating with the Mormons to turn their program into an interfaith program that will be piloted in a diverse community in London. The educational packet's Scripture Index draws on multiple faith traditions to develop a practical model that can be used anywhere in the world to help people in their own communities address the spiritual and physical poverty they find themselves in. The packet is made freely available for others to use (<http://religiousfreedomandbusiness.org/empowerment-plus>).

**Mohamad Hammour** described how the narrative of modern economics becomes anti-religious. The first theorem promoted by welfare economics is that the pursuit of self-interest within a competitive market economy, guided by an invisible hand, will result in the social good of efficiency. Self-interest is promoted by what Ayn Rand in *The Virtue of Selfishness* refers to as egoism. This is a fallacy. The logic of a competitive market has nothing to do with the benefits of selfishness. If you ask an economist, 'Does selfish lying promote the economy? Does selfish theft? Does cheating promote the market? The answer will be 'No. You act with trust.' So, the proposition really is 'If you respect people's rights, then it works. The important thing is that you don't waste.' If the market involves the promotion of values of non-waste and other religious

values, why do we call this selfishness? Rather than take these values for granted, it becomes important to identify the missing principles and revive recognition of values in economic thinking. Economic failure should be highlighted as missing principles. For example, when planned economies separated the metaphysical principle that defines human dignity from the economy, they contributed to the collapse of their own economy. Since the demise of communism, the experience of the combined crisis of democracy and the economy has not been very optimistic. The 2008 global crisis was a shock because it took place in developed economies, in the heart of the modern economy. All of these wonderful sustainable development goals cannot be achieved without capital from the heart pumping money into the system. This indicates there is something genuinely wrong with the system. To say we need better regulation is not very different from the Marxist approach saying we need more time. Are we missing a principle like Marxist economics missed? Is that something we can learn from the human spirituality heritage? Our traditions can educate us about some of the mistakes we have made. Something to consider from finance is that commercial trade and exchange is rooted in metaphysics. Commercial exchange involves intrinsic values. Exchanging shadows for shadows, whether money or derivatives, in the absence of intrinsic values, results in merchants of shadows building houses of cards. We should not be surprised if we observe chronic tendencies for these houses of cards to collapse.

### **Discussion:**

A Japanese delegate representing indigenous traditions appreciated Şentürk's presentation about the importance of values influencing economic development, but wanted to know if his presentation could apply outside of Abrahamic traditions. Şentürk indicated that his intent was to be broader in focus. The multi-faith influence is beyond the Abrahamic traditions and even includes plants and animals. He gave the example of how Andalusia [the Muslim era in Iberia] drew on the creation tradition of Adam and Eve to include non-Abrahamic faiths in their culture. Discussion ensued around the possibilities of challenging values such as greed and selfishness as a way of reorganizing in a more sustainable direction. The limits of organizing an economy around individual character was discussed. Institutions must be put in place that enforce and protect the rules, obligations and rights that provide the foundation for sustainable economies.



A discussion ensued about the relationship between religious and human rights. While the two fields are complementary, there are also tensions between them. Is religious rights a superior approach? Many human rights advocates would disagree with that. More dialogue is needed.

The relationship between religious liberties and interfaith dialogue was also discussed. Some delegates felt that, in practice, these concerns existed in separate, if not polarized, social circles. A lot of the history of interfaith action is out of the conviction that religious institutions have more to offer for peace than for conflict. By working together, religions develop a mutual understanding that living side-by-side in a plural world does not ensure. Interfaith engagement is also essential for social harmony. The existence of interfaith groups enables government or business to reach out to traditions without showing favoritism to one tradition over another. Religious freedom and human rights are bound together in complex ways that needs further discussion. Brian Grim said that the data indicates that high social tensions involving religion is the defining impediment for religious freedom even in contexts where there are governmental restrictions. Interfaith understanding addresses the social side of religious freedom issues. Brian described an interfaith peace walk associated with the pilot program that was held recently in the diverse East London neighborhood. They visited multiple groups where each was asked to tell how their faith relates to sustainability and the environment. They ended with a shared meal at a Sikh temple. In the next iteration, participants will make their presentations in a building of a different faith tradition (e.g., a rabbi presenting in a mosque) to strengthen interfaith relationships, integrate traditions and build interfaith understanding.

A discussion ensued about the importance of balancing rights with responsibilities. Although religious liberties and human rights are complementary approaches, there are also tensions with the claim that rights become entitlements when they are not balanced with responsibility to the collective. What is the relationship between religion and gender equity? This, too, needs more dialogue.

**Key Points Made:**

- Interfaith dialogue can make positive contributions to the governance crisis in international development and the economic crisis in globalization

- Stronger linkages are needed between the following fields: peacebuilding and environmental, climate change and development, religious freedom and interfaith dialogue, human rights and religious rights, religion and gender equity
- Dialogue is particularly needed to address challenges associated with inequity, to develop good codes of conduct for proselytism, and to address concerns over the instrumentalization of religion in development and the economy
- The presence of interfaith organizations provides government with an avenue for obtaining religious consultation without conveying religious favoritism
- More dialogue is needed about the balance between rights and responsibility to the collective
- Character is important, but institutions must be put in place that enforce obligations and protect rights as a foundation for sustainable economies
- Interfaith reduction of social hostilities significantly impacts religious freedom

## **RELIGION, RELIGIOUS FREEDOM AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT**

**Description:** This session focused on the relationship between religion, religious freedom and economic development with particular attention to secularization models of religion-state relations. Moderated by Tahir Mahmood (Founder and Past Chairman, Amity University Institute of Advanced Legal Studies, India), speakers were Faizan Mustafa (Vice-Chancellor, NALSAR University of Law, India), Marie-Claire Foblets (Director, Max Planck Institute for Social Anthropology, Catholic University of Leuven, Belgium), Pasquale Ferrara (Secretary General, European University Institute, Italy), and Katrina Lantos Swett (Commissioner, United States Commission for International Religious Freedom, USA).

### **Presentations Overview:**

**Faizan Mustafa** discussed how India—the seventh largest economy, second most populous and most populous democracy in the world—is as essentially religious as Europe is essentially secular. Four religions began in India and religion is considered an indispensable part of everyday life. At independence, the portion of the country that broke away became a theocracy, but India chose secularism. Religious minorities were given special constitutional rights because individual universal rights were not enough to preserve their distinctive identities, and yet, in a number of legal cases, the courts have not recognized mosques as an essential aspect of minority identities. He provided several additional examples of rising hostilities toward religious

minorities; during this same time period, manufacturing dropped from 24% to 5%. He discussed the strong interconnection between being an open society and having the freedom to pursue ideas, and how the suppression of free speech (e.g., book banning, music censorship, etc.) threatens market conditions. He concluded that sustainability can only be possible when religious minorities are allowed to contribute to society.

**Marie-Claire Foblets** discussed the findings of the *Religare Project (2010-2013)*, a study of religious diversity in the context of diverse European secular models of religion-state relations. European immigration patterns have created irreversible changes in diversity patterns that render the continued protection of historical religions an unviable approach to economic development. The mandate of this interdisciplinary research project was to address how the interplay of religious and secular laws influence public policies, and then identify the impact of these laws on group behavior. How do they exclude or create opportunities for religious minority participation in public or private life? They identified four different patterns among European countries for addressing religion in the context of a secular state. The study describes the gap between the principle of religious freedom and its implementation for each of the four approaches to secular religion-state relations with the goal of staying open to religious diversity in the workplace. They drew a number of conclusions from this comparison for ensuring that religious minorities experience opportunities as inclusion rather than exclusion. The legislative task involves having more open and respectful conversations about religious communities in parliament to innovate more structural approaches to reasonable accommodation for religious diversity in the workplace. Depending on the context, this may involve a diverse array of changes from rephrasing how religion is constitutionally protected to reshuffling public holidays to be more accommodating to religious minorities. Avoiding exclusion is reason enough to link religious freedom to economic development in the context of European secular states.

**Pasquale Ferrara** spoke about challenges associated with linking religious freedom to sustainable development. Although speaking of religious freedom in relation to capitalism may be new, including religious diversity in economic development is not. In Italy, religious orders were important during medieval times and Islam has been historically recognized for providing an important communitarian link in trade relations. The challenge is to disentangle the idea of the liberal economy from western style conceptions of the good society. This is important because

the western approach to liberal institutions is highly contested. Rather than promote modernity as economic liberalism, he challenged listeners to see the world from a different perspective. At a global level, he asked about the role religions might play in denouncing inequalities and making proposals for protecting global public goods such as water, air and biodiversity. He provided an example from the Focolare Movement in Brazil that protected economic freedom and took care of these needs by rearranging profits. About 800 companies chose to split profits between investing in their company, helping the poor, and fostering a culture of sharing/giving. This movement is having an important impact on communities. This model illustrates a way of accommodating religious freedom and individual freedom that is environmentally and socially sustainable.

**Katrina Lantos Swett** set aside her prepared comments to address the 13 November Paris attacks. How has the vicious ideology of ISIL taken root in the minds and hearts of thousands of people including an astonishing number from the most prosperous nations in the world like France and Great Britain? Contributing factors that attribute recruitment to the combination of high unemployment, embedded discrimination, lack of integration/assimilation, and their sophisticated use of social media inadequately explain the recruitment we are seeing. There are many societies grappling with similar situations and ingredients for discontent that do not turn to such nihilistic violence. “We need to probe our souls more deeply to ask what is going on.” As a starting point for discussion, she suggested a recognition that the secularization hypothesis has been empirically shown as not applicable to the majority of the world’s population. Second, she suggested that those who believe passionately and profoundly about sustainable development and the fundamental dignity of each human being have a duty to bring a righteous fervor to the defense of religious freedom that exceeds that of the forces of evil. She called on attendees to have the ‘courage of their convictions’ so as not to leave youth to pursue an empty hedonism characterized by a relentless competition for success. When this happens, she expressed confidence that women and men will use their freedom to build a society that affirms the fundamental rights of all people.

### **Discussion:**

A discussion ensued about the practicalities of implementing religious freedom in social contexts, such as Australia, where violent religion endangers the stability of the country as a

whole. Constitutional structures can protect societies from violent religion by distinguishing free speech from incitement to immediate violence. Drawing a constitutional line of protection protects societies from verbal expressions that pose a threat to the stability, safety and security of a society. Inclusiveness should not result in an abnegation of the public responsibility to de-legitimize views that have no place in civilized society. That said, if the practices are the problem, we need to focus on the practices wherever it occurs. The roots of so-called religious extremism may be the war they grow out of. Many of the youth driven to this are driven by what they see as imperialism, colonialism, drone strikes, surveillance, torture, and imprisonment without trial—all of which are ongoing behaviors associated with the US government.

The secular model of India was discussed in relation to religious minorities. If India is secular, said one challenger, it is because of the Hindu majority and not because of the minorities. How do religious freedom and development go together? Discussants agreed that discrimination against religious minorities will hamper economic development. Disagreement centered on how to characterize the secular state; although India has constitutionally guaranteed more freedom for religious minorities than many Muslim countries, at the moment, religious freedom is significantly hampered.

**Key Points Made:**

- There are diverse approaches to secularization
- Secularization may be a self-limiting process capable of innovating diverse means for including, rather than excluding, religious minorities
- Discrimination against religious minorities depresses economic development
- The liberal economy needs to be disentangled from western style conceptions of the good society
- Constitutional structures can protect societies from violent religion by distinguishing free speech from incitement to immediate violence
- Dialogue about sustainability should be broad enough to include political elements such as drone strikes, surveillance, torture, and imprisonment without trial
- Inclusiveness is no excuse for abnegation of the public responsibility to de-legitimize views that have no place in civilized society

## **FAITH PERSPECTIVES ON SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT**

**Description:** This session focused on the relationship between faith perspectives and sustainable development with attention to the value convergence between world religions and the SDGs, and development of multi-faith rationales for SDG fulfillment. Case studies were discussed from New Zealand, South Africa and China. Moderated by Yoshinobu Miyake (Superior General, Konko Church of Izu, Japan) and Karen Hamilton (Secretary General, Canadian Council of Churches, Canada), speakers were Ganoune Diop (Secretary General, International Religious Liberty Association, Seventh-Day Adventist Church, USA), Paul Morris (UNESCO Chair in Inter-Religious Understanding and Relations, Victoria University of Wellington, New Zealand), Pieter Coertzen (Professor Emeritus, University of Stellenbosch, South Africa), and Zheng Xiaoyun (Deputy Director, Institute of World Religions, Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, China).

**Presentations Overview:** Brian Adams introduced the moderators. He went on to acknowledge the importance of recognizing indigenous traditions wherever and whenever meetings are held. Karen Hamilton described the history, dating from 2005 until the present, of interfaith leaders gathering at parallel summits to challenge and inspire the political leaders of the G8 to mend the world. Karen Hamilton also spoke about ways in which faith perspectives are interwoven (e.g., the Jubilee is common to Jewish and Christian traditions), and how some of these common traditions connect to sustainability (e.g., allowing the land to rest improves long-term soil fecundity). Yoshinobu Miyake then spoke from an indigenous Shinto tradition whose perspective pre-dates the Abrahamic traditions and constitutes a unique contribution to these meetings.

**Ganoune Diop** spoke about the evolution of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) into the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) as a ‘journey to dignity’ by 2030. The aim of combining economic development, environmental sustainability and social inclusion signals some profound interconnected values that are cherished by the entire world. Rather than separate the SDGs from one’s vision of reality, philosophy, ethics and vision of human beings, he articulated several principles for explicit consideration as an asset to sustainable development. Three pillars support the SDG platform: peace and security, justice and development, and human rights. The SDGs are built on a foundation of human dignity that undergirds other values that are promoted in religious and secular societies. One of the most vital expressions of human dignity is the freedom of religion or belief. Positioning religious freedom as a moral center for all members of society would maximize chances for development at personal and corporate levels by intentionally promoting and facilitating bilateral/multilateral connections between people of

difference. He spoke about the roots of these common values in the Helsinki Accords and the United Nations Declaration of Human Rights. He then rooted the same values in religious traditions. From a Biblical perspective, for example, dignity, freedom and solidarity stem from a common root: human beings are created in the image of God (the Book of Genesis 1:26). Humans all belong to the same family and every human has infinite worth. He quoted Rabbi Jonathan Sacks who noted that ‘Abraham himself...performed no miracles, delivered no prophecy, etc. Although he lived differently from his neighbors, he fought for them, prayed for them, and sought to be true to his faith and to be a blessing to others, regardless of their faith.’ That idea remains the simplest definition of the Abrahamic faith: the task is not to conquer. Rather, the task is to bless others. “It was Machiavelli, not Abraham, who said it is better to be feared than to love.” What if the Abrahamic traditions considered every person as sacred to be blessed? What an asset that would be for sustainable development.

**Paul Morris** reflected on the immensity of tasks associated with implementation of the SDGs, and proposed an agenda for what he termed ‘Cosmopolitan Pietists.’ Against the backdrop of cosmopolitan politics, *cosmopietiy* recognizes that the politics of human rights are not limited to the nation state, but are extended beyond *all* political borders to include values and the validity of others’ values. Simply put, ‘my fellows’ material needs are my spiritual needs.’ Although religious diversity is not new, most religious traditions practice a prejudicial pluralism where they rarely acknowledge other traditions as equal. Rather than revive an uncritical model of prejudicial pluralism, Paul Morris encouraged attendees to develop a critical theory of religious equality and reflect upon how they might uniquely partner with secular cosmopolitans to implement the SDGs. He then presented an account of religious equality from the Jewish tradition. The Talmud defines a city as a community of obligation. A 10% tithe is used in this tradition to open the community to the needs of vulnerable people within its walls as a balance to responsibility for one’s intimate community. This entails that the needs of the vulnerable are on equal footing to all other legal privileges as a matter of justice. In our globalized era, if we consider the gated community as the planet, then whose lives are within my gated community? This modern application illustrates a rabbinically-based *cosmopietiy* in support of faith-based commitment to SDG fulfillment. He identified five links between faith-based organizations and development that position them to make a significant impact on SDG fulfillment if their constituencies were sufficiently mobilized: 1) Religious communities offer strong models of

sustainable communities, 2) Charity and support is widely advocated as a religious duty rather than as tax relief, 3) Religions offer cogent alternatives to the neo-Darwinianism of liberal capitalism, 4) Religions appreciate teachings on contingency with recognition that life is dynamic and fragile (resiliency), and 5) Religions are depositories of values and give adherence to orienting narratives of position, place and purpose that are absent from contemporary social thought. Finally, he encouraged attendees to become critically reflective within their own religious tradition as fellow ‘Cosmopolitan Pietists’ to strengthen interfaith commitment to SDG fulfillment.

**Pieter Coertzen** presented a South African case study of religious freedom and sustainable development. Although South Africa’s 1996 Constitution and Bill of Rights takes note of religious diversity, it does not specifically address religious freedom. To address this oversight, academics, activists, jurists, religious and community organizations collaborated to formulate a Charter of Religious Rights to clarify the meaning of religious freedom. In 2010, the Charter was endorsed by 91 leaders of a diverse array of religious organizations. Afterwards, a South African Council for Religious Rights and Freedoms was formed and a Steering Committee formulated to keep the Charter in trust for the endorsers. The Council is in the process of bringing the Charter before Parliament ‘in compliance for public involvement in legislation’ for official recognition. They are asking Parliament to officially take note of the Charter as a document endorsed by the religions of the country that explicates what they understand to be their rights and freedoms that are guaranteed by the Constitution. They have not asked Parliament to accept the Charter because that would present Parliament with the opportunity to change the document. Instead, the Council has asked for official recognition of a document that will remain in the possession of the Council. The Charter is expected to come before Parliament in a matter of weeks. The Charter identifies twelve religious rights and freedoms. Although the Charter only covers signatories, if a religious body who has endorsed the Charter comes before the courts, the courts will have to take the Charter into account when making any decisions. The document is a powerful tool that can be used to create and sustain peace and harmony. The Charter may serve as a useful model for religions in other contexts.

**Zheng Xiaoyun** spoke about religious involvement in social charity work as an example of sustainable development. Although religious involvement has a long history in Chinese society,



faith based social charity work significantly increased following the 2008 Wenchuan earthquake. Faith based organizations have established a response system for providing much-needed assistance at ‘ground zero’ for natural disasters. Religious involvement has also assisted the government with solving certain social problems. For example, the Theravada Buddhist Charity obtained funding from the United Nations to develop a positive relationship between monks and villagers to address drug addiction in the community. China does not yet have charity laws. Governmental representatives are currently studying a variety of international models (e.g., Britain, Canada, Hong Kong, Singapore, United States) for religious involvement in social services that address questions such as: What kind of services should religions provide? What involvement is appropriate for religious organizations? Should government collaborate with religion for social service delivery? China intends to create their own distinctive model for religious involvement in social service delivery in the near future. Some of the challenges they are addressing concern institutional structure (religious charitable organizations do not have independent corporation status within the current frame of administrative law), development of a supervision mechanism for charitable donations, lack of human resource specialization work, and problematic interactions with international charitable organizations. The government considers development of a religious platform for the coordination of social services to be an effective approach for religions to enter the public domain in contemporary China.

### **Discussion:**

Discussion centered around practical examples of tensions in everyday life between sustainable development and religion in South Africa and New Zealand in light of the ideals that were presented. In New Zealand, religious freedom is less of an issue than sustainable development due to governmental tensions over responsibility for climate refugees. Two leading religious organizations supported climate refugee recognition but immigration authorities rejected the case. They will appeal but do not anticipate a successful outcome. Another area of tension involves officially recognized refugees. The Catholic Bishops’ Committee decided to sponsor refugees above the governmental quota. Religious organizations have also experienced tension with the government over provision of affordable housing. Indigenous rights, climate change, refugees, maintaining agribusiness, and ensuring integrity for a national tourist campaign are all “on the ground” issues. South Africa is experiencing many of the same issues. How does

religious freedom relate to sustainable development? Is development under the authorities of traditional leaders so that tribes have access to the graves of their forefathers? Religious freedom can play a role in this situation, but the necessary permissions using the Charter must be had so that access can be gained.

The relationship between religious freedom and fulfillment of the SDGs was also discussed. Data indicate that 76% of the world's population experience either governmental restrictions or social hostilities pertaining to religious freedom. If SDG fulfillment is hampered by suppression of religious freedom, then the extent of this global problem justifies the specific focus on the free exercise of religious belief.

**Key Points Made:**

- There is a value convergence between world religions and the SDGs
- Religious organizations already make significant and valuable contributions to elements of the SDGs in many social contexts, including China
- Development of explicit faith-based rationales for commitment to SDG fulfillment would make these contributions more intentional and likely increase SDG fulfillment
- Protection of religious freedom enhances the contributions of faith-based organizations to SDG fulfillment
- Multiple models exist for the protection of religious freedom
- Multiple models exist for how government and religion contribute to SDG fulfillment

## **PARALLEL SESSIONS**

### **REFUGEE RELIEF AND RELIGION**

**Description:** This session focused on religious involvement in refugee relief. Moderated by Gary B. Doxey (Associate Director, International Center for Law and Religion Studies, BYU, USA), speakers were Mehmet Güllüoğlu (Director General, Red Crescent, Turkey), Mehdi Davut (Suriye Nur Derneği, Turkey), Mahmut Aytekin (İHH Social and Humanitarian Research Center, Turkey), Carmen Asiaín Pereira (Senator, Parliament of Uruguay, President, Latin American Consortium for Freedom of Religion or Belief, Uruguay), and Jacquie Hughes (Special Adviser, House of Lords Communications Committee, United Kingdom).

#### **Presentations Overview:**

**Mehmet Güllüoğlu** spoke about the challenges associated with offering refugee relief in Turkey. In the last 4 years, more than 2.3 million refugees have sought refuge in Turkey, the majority of which have come from Syria and Iraq. This is a significant increase from their normal assistance to refugees. From the beginning of the crisis in 2011, they started to establish camps to provide shelter and healthcare with limited access to extra services (e.g., work permits, travel permits, etc.). About 250,000 people are living in such camps. A second group of refugees are living in major Turkish cities (e.g., Anchora, Istanbul). Since the beginning of the crisis, that group has more than doubled. Sometimes, 4-5 families share a single flat. These refugees have the same access to health services as Turkish citizens, but they do not have access to the provision of education. The rate of immigration change is difficult to track given the enormous scale of the crisis. For example, more than 100,000 people relocated just last week after the Russian bombings. The Turkish Red Crescent is providing services in camps, outside of camps and relief items inside of Syria. They have asked refugees what types of services they need, about work, and the desire for return after the war ends, etc. Most people have indicated a desire to return to their home country. They also asked refugees where they would like to go while the war continues. The majority said that they want to stay in Turkey for religious reasons. Refugees who indicated a desire to relocate to Europe usually indicated it was for reasons of employment.

**Mehdi Davut** spoke about the situation of Syrian refugees in Turkey. He spoke about how displaced Syrians living outside of the camps are trying to become a voice for those living inside of the refugee camps. The media coverage is not telling the whole story and they have a particular perspective that affects their reporting. Non-governmental organizations are attempting to convey what is happening in the camps but they have limited resources. He said that the actual

situation in Syrian camps is a huge humanitarian drama where doctors and teachers are working in the outdoors under trees. He encouraged people to collaborate to assist the refugees living under difficult circumstances.

**Mahmut Aytekin** provided a theoretical academic perspective on relief and development. He critiqued the realistic perspectives used by world governments for contributing to arms races that affect civilians the most and undermine trust between people and governments. Alternatively, he suggested emphasizing a neoliberal institutionalist approach inclusive of faith-based organizations to build trust between civilians and governmental authorities. He identified four types of faith-based organizations (FBOs): passive, active, persuasive and exclusive. In passive FBOs, teachings are secondary to humanitarian considerations in identifying beneficiaries and partners. With active FBOs, faith is the important and exclusive motivation for action, in motivating staff and supporters, and faith plays a direct role in identifying beneficiaries and partners. In addition to faith being the important and exclusive motivation for action, persuasive FBOs are also dominant on the basis for reengagement in that they aim to bring new converts to the faith as well. With exclusive FBOs, faith provides the overriding motivation for action in mobilizing staff and supporters, and provides the principle consideration in identifying beneficiaries. Exclusive FBO social and political engagement is rooted in the faith, and their activities can be militant. He then spoke about the Islamic, Christian, and Hindu roots from which the concept of charity is derived. He provided historic examples of religion transforming societies, both positive and negative. FBOs differ from secular humanitarian organizations. FBOs have unrestricted funding sources given the large numbers of adherents. They can respond to emergency situations more quickly as a consequence. The motivation of FBO adherents is not materialistically oriented. A disadvantage of FBOs is that their particularistic orientation frequently biases the assistance that is offered to be directed toward regions with higher numbers of their particular faith traditions. This lack of neutrality is diminishing with the increased emphasis upon professionalism and codes of ethics in the culture of social service delivery. Another challenge he discussed was associated with constraints on independence coming from governmental and religious influences. Humanitarian relief such as food relief, sponsorship of orphans (e.g., his organization sponsors 60,000), refugee relief (e.g., his organization has spent more than 500 million Turkish lira in the last 3 years), and economic development is both obligatory and voluntary in the Islamic tradition.

**Carmen Asiaín Pereira** reflected the religious dimension of refugee issues in Uruguay from a Latin American perspective. The religious beliefs brought by migrants pose challenges which contribute to human advancement in the end. Migrating movements contribute to cultural enrichment. Awareness of the other teaches people who encounter difference; they must sharpen their ingenuity to find reasonable accommodation for differences. Migration humanizes those involved in the process. In terms of the relationship between religion and migration, she spoke about how religion may be the cause of migration or the provider of humanitarian response. Moreover, the religious rights of asylum seekers is something to be respected. The legal framework in South America focuses on persecution (or fear of persecution) rather than on distinguishing between asylum seekers and refugees. Latin America practices an open-door attitude toward migration; every person has the right to seek and be granted asylum in a foreign territory and the collective expulsion of aliens is prohibited. In Uruguay, immigration is considered the right of the individual and not the power of the state. She provided an example of Uruguay providing protection to Jewish people seeking refuge while being pursued by the German SS. The legal framework in Uruguay provides a specific law for refugees, and the UN High Commissioner for Refugee Representation is done by an agency that offers ecumenical service for human dignity. She described a variety of specific challenges associated with innovating reasonable accommodation to religious diversity (e.g., marital authority and patriotic protesters, times of prayer in the workplace, public wearing of headscarves, religious burial of relatives, religious slaughter and diet, etc.). The most controversial issue so far has been the wearing of the veil in public schools because public education in Uruguay practices secularity. Uruguay also provided asylum to six former Muslim prisoners from Guantanamo Bay in Cuba. There have been a few controversial issues in association with these refugees regarding their marital situations and a hunger strike two of them conducted in front of the US Embassy. Should the absence of a civil marriage be considered criminal? Should hunger strikers be force fed? She concluded emphasizing how these types of events trigger reflection upon human rights and religious freedom. Immigration teaches and humanizes those who encounter the different ways of life introduced by those who seek asylum.

**Jacquie Hughes** spoke about her involvement as a filmmaker making a documentary in the United Kingdom to tell micro-level stories that illustrate a macro-level issue. Documentaries use the power of human experience and storytelling to illustrate something bigger. In recent years,

there has been increasing interest in human trafficking as a social problem. The refugee crisis has amplified the trafficking of women in the United Kingdom, particularly in relation to the sexual exploitation of women (prostitution). She is currently executive producer of a series for British television about the interface between the church, police, and civil society in dealing with the trafficking of women. Of particular interest is how the church has managed to provide a neutral space on sensitive issues to bring together disparate groups to work together in response to the modern increase in human trafficking. One in three people trafficked last year was a child. Enforced prostitution is one of the fastest growing and most lucrative crimes according to the United Nations. Transcontinental trafficking tends to be between wealthy nations. Lots of the victims in Europe and Central Asia are trafficked for sexual exploitation. Of countries that report human trafficking statistics, 40% of countries report having few or no convictions. Romania is the most common country of origin for human trafficking victims. The church has participated in pressing for a progressive governmental political response. This year, the United Kingdom passed a modern slavery act which is one of the first of its kind. This is hugely significant because it gives extra powers to the police. For example, police can now seize assets and campaign for life sentences against traffickers. They have appointed the first independent anti-slavery commissioner. The law also provides extra protections for victims. They have created a national referral system which provides 45 days in a safe house while a victim's case is being considered (the right to remain). She also discussed some of the religious divisions and countermovement strategies of a small group of nuns who are pushing to recriminalize prostitution.

**Key Points Made:**

- The United Kingdom recently passed a modern slavery act to address human trafficking
- Uruguay considers immigration an individual right rather than a power of the state
- Most Syrian refugees in Turkey want to return when peace resumes
- During the conflict, Syrian refugees prefer to stay in Turkey for religious reasons and prefer to seek refuge in Europe for economic reasons
- Faith based involvement in relief and development can build trust between citizens and governmental authorities

## **RELIGION, PEACE, AND SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES**

**Description:** This working session focused on the contributions religious communities can make to building cultures of peace and sustainability. Moderated by Yannis Ktistakis (Professor of Public International Law, Demokritus University of Thrace; Faculty of Political Science and International Relations, Boğaziçi University, Greece), speakers were Brett G. Scharffs (Associate Dean for Faculty and Curriculum, Francis R. Kirkham Professor of Law; Associate Director, International Center for Law and Religion Studies, Brigham Young University Law School, USA), Elizabeta Kitanović (Executive Secretary for Human Rights, Conference of European Churches, Belgium), Mark Hill QC (Honorary Professor, Centre for Law and Religion, Cardiff University, United Kingdom; Extraordinary Professor, University of Pretoria, South Africa; Visiting Professor, Dickson Poon Law School, King's College, United Kingdom), Knox Thames (Special Advisor for Religious Minorities in the Near East and South/Central Asia, United States Department of State, USA), and Alberto Quattrucci (Professor and Secretary General of Peoples and Religions, Sant'Egidio Community, Italy).

### **Presentations Overview:**

**Brett G. Scharffs** spoke about going beyond juriscentric solutions to focusing on speech that offends and harms. The law has a place for punishing crimes, but he wanted to address the broader social thinking rather than waiting for criminal behavior to occur. He distinguished three approaches. The first involves a cycle where the speaker insults or intimidates, and the target responds with retaliation. A second approach involves a speaker addressing an audience where the affinity group is incited to violence through the oversimplification of complex situations. The third approach is more common. A speaker tells the group to act with hate; this affects the target which causes the target's affinity group to react, inciting a cycle of violence (e.g., the cartoon controversy, the burning of the Qur'an). He then spoke about factors influencing the escalation and de-escalation of cycles of violence. Accelerants involve easily inflamed targets that utilize social media to inflame the situation. Angry young men are inflamed to hate in the speech group and young men in the target affinity group are incited to defend with violence. The speaker doubles down, repeats and elaborates an insult. To decelerate, or cool down the situation, a speaker can back down, the audience can speak in ways that are soothing, the media can be careful, and social media can be used to respond calmly in ways that bring solace. Angry young men can find constructive ways to channel their anger. The target can accept an apology and respond with love to break the cycle of violence. Speakers and victim affinity groups can choose to respond without hate and violence and choose, instead, to educate about harm. Some of the tactics for deceleration involve timing. Preventive work, before a provocation arises, responds to

grievances and implements fair, non-discriminatory legal systems. Issues that have been simmering for a long time become recognized and addressed. Any hateful speech gets responded to with counter speech. During a provocation, he recommended using social media to show solidarity and respond with empathy and calm. After a provocation, he emphasized the importance of responding with calm (e.g., Peace for Paris, Jean Jullien's response on Facebook using the sign of peace, the Eiffel tower; this image was repeated around the world; hashtag #notinmyname). It is important for people to initiate calming responses to violent acts. Audiences have an obligation to make it clear that haters do not speak for them. In particular, the victim audience has a duty to not further inflame the situation, but, instead, they have a responsibility to hold the community back from retaliation.

**Elizabeta Kitanović** spoke from a human rights perspective about how dialogue on religious freedom and peace serve as preconditions for the development of sustainable communities. She discussed various dimensions associated with the term 'sustainable communities' such as promoting sustainable living, becoming economically sustainable, developing local control of natural resources and/or increasing community involvement in cultural development (with particular attention to a rich participation of churches and professional organizations). She talked about how human rights can connect to all of these issues and why it is important to guarantee human rights using a legal framework. She discussed the Council of Europe's interreligious initiative that works to enhance democracy by building mutual respect and developing conflict resolution skills. The program sets standards for shared community visions of the world through the identification of similarities and differences between divergent perspectives in order to achieve consensus for shared communal living. They work with people to make the necessary adjustments to social and political arrangements to bridge the divide between those who see diversity as a threat and those who view diversity as enrichment. The program shares best practices for the democratic management of social diversity and the promotion of social cohesion. She described various European projects such as a roundtable that was held recently in Ukraine to address prisoners' rights and a project proposal for homeless people. She talked about how security can only be established on a basis of trust and this requires mutual respect and understanding. What is particularly important for the Conference of European Churches is to establish freedom of religion or belief so that communities, inclusive of religious minorities,



might move together towards peace to strengthen values such as democracy, human rights and the rule of law.

**Mark Hill QC** spoke about *Magna Carta* noting that 2015 marked the 800<sup>th</sup> anniversary of this pragmatic peace treaty that has become the bedrock of democracy and the rule of law throughout the common law world. He argued that learning from the past might help to influence the future. Historically, the church had been responsible for drafting the document mediating the relationship between the ruler and the ruled, and enforcing its provisions. A separate, though less well known document, the Charter of the Forest of 1217, concerned the rights of the ordinary people and had its origins in one clause of *Magna Carta*. The Charter of the Forest gave citizens the right to farm and gather food on the feudal lands, provided no harm was occasioned to any neighbour. The churches were the driving force behind these treaties. *Magna Carta* has survived, but the Charter of the Forest has been forgotten. He described how the Charter of the Forest was an important forerunner of the United Nations Declaration of Human Rights. The anniversary of the Charter of the Forest will fall in 2017. He encouraged attendees to take advantage of the opportunity to celebrate the anniversary of the Charter of the Forest just as the United Nations' Declaration of Human Rights is regarded as a *Magna Carta* for the modern age. Churches today could draft a global charter for sustainable use of the environment. During the subsequent discussion, Muslim contributions to human rights were acknowledged such as Medina Law from the thirteenth century. Although today's lawmakers have a debt to historical religious thought, it was also noted that these charters are not perfect; *Magna Carta* reflected the culture of the time, including gender bias and anti-Semitism.

**Knox Thames** spoke about the heartbreaking situation of Syrian refugees. He addressed what can, and should, be done from his perspective as Special Advisor for Religious Minorities for the US State Department. He identified three priorities: protection, governance and reform. Offering protection means providing supportive air strikes, involving a US commitment of billions of dollars' worth of assistance, etc. Governance refers to finding ways for nations to protect religious minorities including the condemnation of hateful speech. To ensure that religious minorities have a place at the governance table, they must be represented in government. In some contexts, this involves changing the mindset that views religious diversity as a weakness to instead view religious diversity as a strength. Governance also involves protection of the places

and things that allow people to stay in their own countries (e.g., ISIL destroying homes, historical sites and artifacts). Reform involves governments accepting diversity within their own countries. Educational texts must become inclusive, discrimination must be discouraged and governments must be convinced to respect their religious minorities. He also spoke about the importance of protecting religious pluralism.

**Alberto Quattrucci** said that the Paris event emphasizes our need to find essential inter-religious dialogue. We must respect each other's religions and build peace through dialogue that defends life and human rights. There is a new mixture of religion and violence represented by terrorism. Religions have a responsibility to bring back hope. They can promote dialogue between countries and all peoples. They can place God into the dialogue that includes more than just believers. Every person is bonded to every other and no person is an island. Each religion can play a part in making every community sustainable and peaceful, but they must acknowledge and address the poor and most vulnerable in every society. Humanity has lost its human dimension. We must seek God to find our humanity. Only by changing our hearts and minds can we change the world. As an example of how the world can change, he referred to the recent change in relations between the United States and Cuba. Given the interdependency and interconnectedness of societies, the voices of religions, economies and cultures must be combined.

**Key Points Made:**

- Interfaith dialogue inclusive of religious minorities serves as a precondition for establishment of sustainable communities
- Religious communities can deescalate violence by initiating calming responses to help break the cycle of violence
- Religious communities can use anniversaries of important documents such as *Magna Carta* and the Charter of the Forest to help build a culture of peace and human rights
- Religious diversity can be a cultural strength rather than a social weakness
- Religious contributions can play a valuable role in creating more humane societies

## **RELIGION, BUSINESS, AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT**

**Description:** This session focused on promoting the well-being of the underserved by providing access to high quality contributions that religious organizations make toward peace and sustainability as sacred communities that contribute in diverse ways to local communities.

Moderated by Frederick W. Axelgard (Senior Fellow, Wheatley Institution, Brigham Young University, USA), speakers were Ram Cnaan (Professor and Director, Program for Religion and Social Policy Research, University of Pennsylvania, USA), Edmund Newell (Priest, Church of England, Principle, Cumberland Lodge, United Kingdom), Önder Küçükural (Assistant Professor, Alliance of Civilizations Institute, Fatih Sultan Mehmet Waqf University, Turkey), and Erol M. Yerar (President, Turkish Ski Federation; Founding President of MÜSIAD Independent Industrialists and Businessman Association, Turkey).

### **Presentations Overview:**

**Ram Cnaan** spoke about quantifying the social value local religious organizations make to public life. Congregations are doing a lot for the benefit of the community that can be quantified so that people will not underestimate the loss to communities when they make decisions about whether or not to close a particular congregation. A study of neighborhood congregations showed that in contexts where a congregation closed down, ten years later, there was a major decrease in the quality of life. Congregations make valuable contributions to local communities in ways that are often taken for granted. They conducted a pilot study of ten Philadelphia congregations and now they are studying 90 congregations to quantify individual volunteer work in neighborhoods, congregational neighborhood spending (e.g., 80% of budget is spent locally from flower shops to boiler repairs and salaries), the ‘magnet effect’ of churches (e.g., tourism), and provision of private education. Congregations provide an invisible social safety net for neighborhoods. For the 90 congregations, their average financial contribution to the local economy was \$2.6 million. If the ten richest congregations are removed so the data is not skewed, the average congregational contribution to the neighborhood economy drops to \$2 million. On average, every congregation provides 4.73 different social programs that enhances the quality of neighborhood life beyond the congregation. Congregations contribute to local employment that is paid for by donations (not government or business). Only 16% of the more than 1000 paid positions for 90 congregations are for clergy; the remaining positions represent custodians, teachers, etc. Congregations are also economic drivers in neighborhoods beyond worship services, attracting people to social events, reunions, congregational events, day care centers, election-day polling locations, etc. The quantification of congregational neighborhood

contributions enables decision-makers to better understand the magnitude of religious involvement when making decisions that affect the quality of life in communities.

**Edmund Newell** spoke about his Cathedral's involvement in a civil society Make Poverty History campaign in support of fulfillment of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) ten years ago. The United Nations and the United Kingdom's chancellor supported their movement. If he were to do it again, he would approach the movement differently by focusing on business to work for, rather than against, the world's poor. The shift this year from the MDGs to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), incorporates a recognition that multinational companies wield enormous power that transcend national boundaries. The SDGs provide businesses with a diverse set of opportunities for involvement. Goal 8 calls for the decoupling of economic growth from environmental degradation. Goal 9 calls for sustainable industrialization. Goal 12 calls for a reduction of food waste. Goal 2 calls for a doubling of small scale food productivity. Goal 7 calls for the balance of energy supply to shift to renewables. Goal 6 calls for universal access to water and sanitation. The fishing industry is affected by Goal 14. There is an emphasis throughout the set of goals on removing subsidies and liberating trade through the involvement of the World Trade Organization. Businesses are encouraged to become familiar with the SDGs, align their priorities with SDG goals, decide on how they might contribute and then assess their ongoing progress. There are many challenges to this process. The SDGs are aspirational and voluntary. Implementing them may be costly, affecting profits. The SDGs are not legally binding. Another hurdle is tokenism. One of the problems associated with corporate social responsibility is to ensure that commitments represent more than ethical window dressing. Management objectives have to align with ethical objectives. If this is not done, management takes precedence. A third hurdle is short-termism. Development requires a long-term commitment to a future vision which requires a shift in mindset. Religions have a role to play in influencing ethical investment. Religious groups can meet with business and apply shareholder pressure. Getting people to reflect on how their faith relates to their working lives is important. He spoke about The Faith and Work Forum (<http://www.faithandworkforum.org.uk>) which helps people in business and the professions engage their faith to influence corporate culture and integrate their faith with their work life. Projects such as this encourage voluntary change from within the business world but their influence will likely be limited. In 2011, the St. Paul's Institute did a community survey and 76% of city workers strongly disagreed that the city should listen to guidance from

the church. In a national survey about church reputation, only 20% of respondents regarded the Church of England as a positive voice in society, and only a small percentage of those indicated that it was because of an ethical voice. Religious organizations should not presume that others will automatically consider them to be ethical role models. Nevertheless, people of faith have much to contribute to the SDGs through joint initiatives, lobbying, education, and direct engagement with business to address questions of ‘what is business for?’

**Önder Küçükural** drew on field research involving interviews of 200 people in 80 cities to investigate how Islam shapes everyday life. Particular attention was paid to economic and ethical decision making. In Turkey, people think in terms of religion. People experience tension between the sacred and the mundane, and they struggle to discern the degree to which they lead good lives. People in Turkey use religious reasoning, rather than other types of reasoning, to bring resolution to this tension. Sometimes this results in behavior reflective of the distinction between the sacred and profane. He described the example of a person who installed two water supplies, one legal and one illegal. He was willing to pay to use water for ablutions. He was not willing to pay for water used for other aspects of everyday life. By discussing how texts are interpreted, it is possible to identify distinctively Islamic models for principled economic behavior using religious reasoning. Religious reasoning is not monolithic. He concluded noting that, through dialogue, diverse forms of religious reasoning can be more fully developed in relation to sustainable economic development. This might be one way to draw upon Turkey’s high religiosity to reduce the high level of corruption practiced in Turkish society.

**Erol M. Yazar** addressed the growing inequalities in the world. Wealth can increase without the gap increasing between rich and poor. Paying attention to the financing method used by industry within a country is crucial for understanding how to address what he referred to as financial terrorism. World inequality is at an historic high even in the wealthiest countries. Most nations are caught in a debt trap that limits their national sovereignty. He discussed problems associated with interest-based capitalism and spoke about teachings from the Qur’an that forbid the collection of interest. He critiqued the banking system as contributing to poverty through an excessive amount of interest-based financial accumulation. The religion of Islam teaches that a just system must involve risk sharing in the capitalist economy. Interfaith cooperation has much to contribute to the development of a mutual understanding between those who practice interest-

based capitalism and Arab innovations. He suggested that usury-based financial state systems is disturbing social harmony in the global world. He encouraged people to focus on social problems from a financial perspective. In addition to the risk sharing/venture capital system approach, he suggested increasing the number of charitable institutions that offer interest-free loans.

### **Key Points Made:**

- Religious organizations make far more valuable contributions to local communities beyond their congregations than are generally recognized
- The new SDGs present religions with a strategic opportunity for religious collaborations with business organizations for the common good
- Religious reasoning in Muslim contexts is a resource for influencing economic behavior for the common good
- Development of risk sharing and interest-free approaches to financial investment can contribute to the common good
- Interfaith dialogue can contribute to improved mutual understanding between interest-based and non-interest based economic models

## **ISLAMIC FINANCE AND THEORIES OF DEVELOPMENT**

**Description:** This working group focused on the history of Islamic financial institutions and ways Islamic finance can contribute to sustainable economic development. Moderated by Mehmet Bulut (President, Istanbul Sabahattin Zaim University, Turkey), presenters were Needet Şensoy (Chairman, Audit Committee, International Islamic Liquidity Management Corporation, Turkey), Cüneyt Orman (Advisor, Central Bank of the Republic of Turkey, Turkey), Asad Zaman (Vice Chancellor, Pakistan Institute of Development Economics, Quaid-i-Azam University, Pakistan), and Murat Çizakça (Emeritus and Adjunct Professor of Islamic Finance, Luxembourg School of Finance, University of Luxembourg, Luxembourg).

### **Presentations Overview:**

**Needet Şensoy** discussed Islamic finance and religion including concepts of growth, development, religion, economics, and how financial systems comply with Islamic rules. He differentiated growth from development. Growth is quantitative but development is mostly qualitative and covers the freedom of people, literacy and educational standards. Therefore religion is more relevant to economic development than to economic growth. Religion involves development of the people. He identified a term in Islamic literature covering aspects such as

life, faith, intellect, and wealth that contributes to a qualitative approach to development. Whatever ensures the safeguarding of these aspects serve the public interest and is desirable. The question is, do economics and finance help safeguard these? Inferences can be made to enrich faith. For example, fraud can be viewed as a sin that damages faith so regulations to prevent fraud safeguards faith. Recent developments in management brings good governance, and under good governance is management of the environment which aims to protect people from fraud. He discussed a second term from Islamic literature that refers to the perfect and comfortable life. This concept also contributes to a qualitative understanding of economic growth. He talked about risk, and how trade and partnership replaces interest. Other aspects of Islamic finance discussed include preventing excessive expansion of debt, risk sharing, and other aspects associated with establishing imperfect, but more Islamic, financial systems. Most of the western countries are becoming systemically more important to Islamic financial systems and he talked about how there is a potential for growth of Islamic finance in many non-Islamic countries. He also discussed the need for the financial inclusion of Muslim minorities in Europe and the possibilities associated with developing more inclusive European financial systems that integrate the financial activities of Muslim minorities. For example, *The Guardian* reported in 2002 that 30% of the Muslim population in Belgium owns real estate, Muslim minorities in Germany have an estimated wealth in excess of 35 million Euro, Muslim minorities produce 2% of the GDP in Italy, and there are over 5000 Muslim millionaires in the United Kingdom. He also described the impact of Muslim minorities' consumer behavior on European economics, and the minorities' demands for European financial services. He discussed the benefits to Europe of connecting Islamic banks to the European banking system. He concluded by identifying ways in which other religions (e.g., Judaism, Roman Catholicism, etc.) also prohibit the charging of excessive interest. He referred to research discussing attitudes toward financial systems, and how the 2008 financial crisis has renewed the claim that the Islamic banking approach is a lesser known but superior banking system. He also shared research indicating that non-Muslim customers in Saudi Arabia used Islamic banking services because of cheaper costs, better quality and the nature of the services provided by the banks. His illustrative examples described the changing attitudes toward Islamic finance from multiple perspectives.

**Cüneyt Orman** discussed the relationship between religiosity and state welfare spending. His paper sought to bring together two perspectives. The first perspective says that when people are

more religious, they can cope better with income inequality, so religiosity contributes to the persistence of social inequality in society. Alternatively, the welfare spending that derives from religiosity provides an alternative social insurance to government spending. This approach explains a pattern that in more religious countries, social insurance is provided by religious provision so there is less need for state subsidies; in countries with higher social welfare spending, there is less need for religiously based social insurance so religiosity goes down. He noted that these explanations do not take income inequality into account. So he sought to bring these two literatures together and synthesize them. He proposed an alternative theoretical mechanism that can simultaneously generate the findings in these two literatures: 1) a positive correlation between religiosity and income inequality, and 2) a negative correlation between religiosity and state welfare spending. The mechanism recognizes variation in religions roles for providing incentives with a particular focus on charitable giving. Some religions provide greater incentives (e.g., salvific merit) than other religions for people to engage in charitable activities. Their model took a rational choice approach with religiosity as the independent variable and income inequality as the dependent variable. He discussed measurement issues to avoid spurious associations between variables. Higher religiosity increases private charitable spending and smaller sized government resulting in reduced governmental resources for responding to income inequality; income inequality increases as a consequence. Their model distinguishes between secular consumption and afterlife consumption (donations). Given the collective choice of tax rate, and the amount of governmental distribution, he theorized that agents choose consumption and afterlife consumption to optimize personal satisfaction. He predicted that an increase in strength of belief reduces the equilibrium of tax rates, lowers provision of public goods, and results in higher income inequality. Empirically, they found that countries with higher religiosity have higher levels of income inequality, smaller governments and less governmental redistribution and provision of public goods.

**Asad Zaman** talked about the importance of having institutional structures that translate purpose into reality; just having good feelings and character is not enough. He discussed problems with western institutional structures that were derived from loss of faith and interfaith conflict. This sense of betrayal contributed to an emphasis upon reason that would only trust what can be materially experienced. Secular modern thought begins with a disbelief in the unseen which is quite different from religious assumptions. How can interfaith dialogue take place as an



academic discourse given the denial of the existence of the unseen? He critiqued several key assumptions of contemporary secular modernity as a hegemonic influence on the global economy and environment (e.g., secularization is inevitable, humans are selfish, knowledge is objective, etc.). The consequent loss of religious knowledge has contributed to widespread dehumanization and environmental destruction because the heart has been removed from the equation. He talked about how too much pleasure can destroy the soul, and how the essence of humanity is the ability to feel the pain of others. He then talked about barriers to the re-insertion of religious knowledge back into public life (e.g., dismissal of religiously based understanding as legitimate knowledge, etc.). In particular, he discussed how the theory of firms is based on the idea of competition. This may be so in the jungle, but civilization involves leaving the jungle. Actual case studies show many harmful effects of competition where honest and efficient merchants are driven out of the market by dishonest and unfair techniques. Cooperation is a more natural model for human beings, who have natural social tendencies. This paradigm is also strongly supported by religions, in contrast to secular modern models. Peace and harmony are strongly dependent on developing cooperative tendencies among human beings. He concluded by noting the essential importance of agreeing on a goal in order to be able to work together. The capabilities approach developed by Amartya Sen following the lead of Mahbubul Haq has the promise of providing a goal which has the potential to unite the Moderns and the traditional religions. The religions agree that all human beings are born with great potential. They provide pathways to help achieve this potential. Providing all human beings with the opportunity to achieve the potential buried inside them is the goal of social, political and economic organization. Just as every seed has the potential to grow in a natural direction, given the opportunity, so every human being has faculties, intellectual, physical, spiritual, and emotional which can grow if they are nurtured. All religions have much to offer in the way of understanding human beings, and how they can grow spiritually. By encouraging living simple lifestyles, discouraging greed and envy, and practicing the golden rule, peace, harmony and sustainable development become possible.

**Murat Çizakça** made a case for the historical perspective that Islamic capitalism led to modern capitalism. Although the Islamic world (with the exception of oil exporting countries) is ‘poor’ when compared to other nations in that the average per capita income of Muslim countries amounts to about \$4,200 to \$4,500 per capita (PPP), this was not always so. From the 7th

century, when Islam was revealed, until the middle of the 13th, the Islamic World flourished. The Qur'an and the Hadith indicate that merchants at that time were highly respected, property rights and free trade were granted utmost importance, principles of market economy and market wage rate were applied, and interference in the markets was considered to be a transgression. Although leftist Muslims dislike this perspective, all of these indicate that the economic system envisaged in the classical sources of Islam was a capitalistic type of system. He discussed different types of capitalisms such as democratic capitalism (as in the West), authoritarian capitalism (as in China and Singapore), Islamic capitalism (7th century to the 13th), Catholic capitalism of Northern Italy and Flanders (11th-13th centuries), and Protestant capitalism (that emerged from the 16th century on). The salient characteristics of all capitalist economies, he said, was the use of the market for the allocation and distribution of goods and factors of production. Islamic capitalism was an ethical, commercial and pre-industrial form of capitalism involving risk sharing between capitalists and entrepreneurs, interest prohibition, business partnerships, waqfs (foundations) and maritime law. He discussed how Islamic capitalism and western capitalism shared common traits during the medieval period. But in time, three events triggered a diversion: Dilution of the interest prohibition in the West, the loss of Catholic influence with the French Enlightenment, and the spread of the Enlightenment over continental Europe with Napoleon. Events like this did not take place in the Islamic World. Over time, Islamic states gradually moved from Islamic ethical capitalism towards proto-quasi socialist systems. He talked about how the Ottoman proto-quasi socialism could not compete with western profit maximizing capitalism. After the 1960s, when Muslim countries re-gained their independence from the colonial powers, they wanted to achieve sustained economic development, and do this in conformity with the basic teachings of Islam. They tried to do this by focusing on Islamic finance, but all financial systems function within broader socioeconomic contexts. Islamic financial institutions eventually ended up imitating the dominant system. Today, Islamic finance has become a high cost imitation of Western finance. Globalization has now become fragile and uncertain. As an antidote, he suggested that the Islamic World re-introduce its own ethical, risk sharing version of capitalism. He discussed ways to reform financial institutions using the Al-Ghazali and Al-Shatibi optimum as a guide.

## **Key Points Made:**

- Religion makes qualitative contributions to economic development
- Integration of Islamic minority economic activities could strengthen the European economy
- Sustainability involves development of institutional structures that translate purpose into reality
- Religion has contributions to make toward the development of meaningful and sustainable institutional structures
- A case can be made for the perspective that medieval Islamic capitalism led to modern Western capitalism
- Globalization would benefit from the reform of Islamic financial institutions in accordance with the Al-Ghazali and Al-Shatibi optimum

## **RELIGION AND PRODUCTIVE, DECENT EMPLOYMENT**

**Description:** This session focused on the relationship between religion and the workplace. Moderated by Katayoun Alidadi (Postdoctoral Researcher, Max Planck Institute for Social Anthropology, Germany), speakers were Zana Çitak (Dept. of International Relations, Middle East Technical University, Turkey), Stephanos Stavros (Executive Secretary to the European Commission Against Racism and Intolerance, Council of Europe, France), Marco Ventura (Professor of Law and Religion, University of Siena, Italy), and Dedong Wei (Dean, School of Philosophy, Renmin University, China).

### **Presentations Overview:**

**Zana Çitak** spoke about *The Religare Project* findings as pertains to the Turkish case. Religious discrimination cases are more ideologically grounded, and therefore more controversial, than discrimination cases based upon gender, race or disability. Two things dominate workplace religious discrimination: The issue of the headscarf and discrimination against religious minorities. Turkey is not a litigious society and few cases actually make it to the courts, in general, so there is a tendency to resolve workplace discrimination through personal and unofficial arbitration. In addition, state discourse in Turkey says that 99% of society is Muslim which conceals religious diversity in the country and gives the impression of a religiously homogenous society. For these reasons, he said that discrimination on the grounds of religion and belief are much more common than data indicate. The *Religare Project* findings are based on

29 expert interviews conducted with religious NGOs and political party representatives. They found that people seldom apply to the courts when they experience discrimination because of concerns that revealing one's identity could contribute to further discrimination and affect future employment. Discrimination against wearing the headscarf has been rarer following the legal changes for civil services, but there are issues associated with religious minority discrimination. Discriminatory acts range from insulting remarks from coworkers to reassignment to unpopular units, not being entrusted with real responsibility, being passed over for promotion, and being given extra task assignments without extra pay during Ramadan. In job interviews, the name and birthplace can be stigmatizing identity markers. The Christian community is usually self-employed or employed by other Christians. He described systematic exclusion from civil service and the army for non-Sunni people. Protestants have confessed that they usually hide their identity or try not to change their religion marker on their identity card so as not to be discriminated against in employment. Conclusions from the *The Religare Project* are that: 1) Discrimination in the workplace is another manifestation of problems in the law; 2) identity politics do not automatically translate into pluralism; and 3) there is a need for a state that will play the role of arbiter rather than that the role of social control. He concluded by saying that there is room for the role of government to create a more tolerant society.

**Stephanos Stavros** spoke about religious discrimination in the workplace and how the Anti-Racism Commission of the Council of Europe helps its member states eradicate it. The Council of Europe has 47 member states. The Council promotes democracy, the rule of law and human rights. The European Convention guarantees, among other rights, the right of freedom of religion or belief. The European Convention established the European Court of Human Rights. The Court has taken a conservative approach to how they have handled religious discrimination in employment cases. He described cases having to do with working hours and the lack of accommodation for hours lost for people not wanting to work for religious purposes. In headscarf cases, the applicants lost; employment banning was upheld by the court as not being a violation of religious freedom. In the final case he described, the court signaled a more open approach, but it was of a Christian woman who wanted to wear her cross over her uniform, and the company's policy was not consistently applied. He described some of the Council of Europe's monitoring mechanisms including the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance which also deals with discrimination against religion. The countries are assessed by

the commission every five years accompanied by the issuance of general policy recommendations addressed to all member states. The latest recommendations, in June 2012, addressed employment discrimination, stressing the importance of creating accommodating workplace environments for business success. Direct and indirect discrimination was banned. Training in religious diversity was to be offered to human resource personnel. Member states are to collect data on religious minorities in the workplace and public authorities are to actively promote equality. When authorities suspect that the proportion of religious minorities among civil servants is too low, for example, they should adopt a policy to deal with it. Employers are to identify barriers to religious employment and then adopt reasonable accommodation. When issues are brought before the court as a balance of interest between the employees' private life and the employer, the court will likely rule in favor of small business, but if the case is addressed from the point of view of indirect religious discrimination, the court may take into account the special burdens these leave periods place upon employees who are committed to performing their essential religious duties; a case such as this presents the court with an opportunity to interpret indirect religious discrimination in a meaningful way. He discussed some of the future challenges in light of other cases involving employment in faith-based organizations, businesses "with a secular ethos" and customer preferences. In Poland, for example, the Supreme Court had said that gas stations close to Germany could fire Polish workers in order to hire German workers so that German visitors driving in Poland would feel more comfortable with gas workers who shared their culture. The question to be asked is: How much do you interact with people who sell you gas? The last challenge is conscientious objection in employment. The European Court of Human Rights found that doctors who exercised the right of conscientious objection by refusing service to some patients violated some other human rights of these patients. He concluded by asking whether or not societies can afford to alienate people who have strong religious beliefs if alienation contributes to extremism. There are people in Europe who have strong religious beliefs. Where will Europe be led if Europeans do not try to accommodate these people?

**Marco Ventura** spoke from the perspective of European legal scholarship. He considered several categories and decisive factors, from a legal perspective, influencing tension in the workplace over religion. He discussed some non-profit guidelines for sensible management of the tensions between religion and employment that balance the quality of job performance and

attracting, motivating and retaining staff, with the reputation of the organization. He identified four fundamental categories under which issues have been observed as taking place in Europe: 1) A person of faith is employed by a private company and wants to express that faith in the context of employment; 2) a person of faith is employed by the state that may be more tolerant to some types of religious expressions than others; 3) employment by a religious organization with a religious ethos; and 4) ministers of religion who are employed by an organization. Each of these categories is undergoing challenge and pressure for change, and the four categories interact with one another. He went on to identify eight factors that are important to pay increasing attention to when dealing with conflicts that emerge from these four categories. It is apparent that when tensions arise on the ground, heavy case-loads often contribute to inaccurate and poor fact-finding with inadequate attention paid to circumstances and context. Another point is to be attentive to how the line is drawn between public and private. The duty of loyalty is mutually binding between employee and employer, so how does this play out in relation to religion and employment? Other factors discussed included ministerial exemptions, contractual arrangements, grounds for dismissal, right to due process and the position within the organization. For example, should a gardener be treated differently than a teacher if they have different distances to the core of the organization's mission? He offered these comments as a contribution to appropriate, sensitive, and careful work on the broader question of how religion can contribute to productive and decent employment.

**Dedong Wei** described recent changes in China's religious landscape. He spoke about the government approved and funded China Religion Survey that was jointly conducted by China's National Survey Research Center and 30 academic institutions throughout China. The first survey focused on more than 4382 religious venues from 243 counties in 31 provinces. The first survey was nationally representative, covered 10% of China's counties, and oversampled on minority areas and the top five most religious counties. In the last six years, five big religions have been legally recognized in mainland China: Buddhism, Daoism, Islam, Catholicism, and Protestantism. In addition, there is widespread registered and legally unrecognized folk beliefs and religious practices that have been introduced by foreigners (e.g., Baha'i). Confucianism is not recognized as a religion in mainland China. Although accurate statistics are difficult to come by, the survey estimates indicate that about 14-15% of the mainland Chinese population is religious representing about 180 million religious believers (comprised of 6 million Catholics, 38

million Protestants, and 23 million Muslims). He described additional findings related to age, gender, educational attainment and socioeconomic status from the survey regarding the religious landscape in China. The next China Religion Survey will be expanded to include unregistered religions. The Research Center plans to conduct the China Religion Survey every five years.

### **Key Points Made:**

- Religious minority discrimination in contexts of somewhat homogenous societies, such as Turkey, may be far more common than data would suggest
- Europe has people with strong religious beliefs, so reasonable accommodation to their concerns is in the best interest of harmonious social relations
- Transnational commissions, such as the Anti-Racism Commission of the Council of Europe, can help member states eradicate religious discrimination in the workplace
- Accurate fact-finding with careful attention to context and circumstance is crucial for understanding and resolving tensions that arise around religion in the workplace
- China's religious landscape is rapidly changing and the government is investing in quality national survey research to better understand those changes

### **RELIGION, QUALITY EDUCATION AND CULTURAL DEVELOPMENT**

**Description:** This session focused on the relation between religion and public education in light of changing religion-state relations. Moderated by Mehmet Kamil Berse (President, Dersaadet Culture, Literature, and Art Platform, Turkey), presenters were W. Cole Durham (President, International Consortium for Law and Religion Studies, Italy; Susa Young Gates Professor of Law and Director, International Center for Law and Religion Studies, Brigham Young University Law School, USA), Alparslan Açıkgenç (Professor of Civilization Studies, Alliance of Civilizations Institute, Fatih Sultan Mehmet Waqf University, Turkey), Şule Albayrak (Faculty of Theology, Marmara University Istanbul, Turkey), Blandine Chelini-Pont (Professor in History, Law and Religion, Aix-Marseille University, France), and Ana Maria Célis (Faculty of Law, Pontifical Catholic University of Chile; President, Latin American Consortium for Religious Freedom, Chile).

### **Presentations Overview:**

**W. Cole Durham** spoke about education as a critical issue in the religion-state domain. In recent years, it has become clear that the secularization thesis in its classical form is dead in that the strength of religion in the public sphere can be observed everywhere. One of the reasons for this is that 80% of the world's population identifies with a religious group. Slightly over 15% are

unaffiliated, but many of these still have religious beliefs; they are just unaligned with organized religion. Taking religion into account as a social factor influencing social relations is increasingly important. A little over a quarter of religious people live in contexts where they are a minority. Even members of majority traditions may still be part of a splinter group that effectively makes them a minority. In addition, it is a well-known fact that most crime is done by young males aged 15-25. Demographics indicate that we have a 'young population' in that there are millions of people becoming young adults, and most violence in the name of religion is done by young men aged 15-25. Religious groups need to find ways to connect with the cohorts of young people who are coming of age to help them find their way. This is one of the gravest and greatest challenges for peace and development. He recommended that educational practitioners follow the *Toledo Guiding Principles on Teaching about Religions and Beliefs in Public Schools* by the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (<http://www.osce.org/odihr/29154>). Rather than teach religion, per se, these principles take a human rights approach to teaching about religion. The approach is not inculcated by religion of a specific nature. Respectful knowledge about other religions fosters democratic citizenship, understanding of diversity, and it can enhance social cohesion. The recommended basic guiding principles are that teaching must be fair, accurate and based on sound scholarship. The curriculum can contribute to stereotypes if it is not respectful or accurate. But even if the curriculum teaches respect, if the teacher is intolerant, guess what message is conveyed to students? The guiding principles advise that teachers demonstrate respect, respect the roles of families and bring together various stakeholders to diffuse all kinds of problems in the curriculum development process.

**Alparslan Açıkgenç** discussed religious Islamist contributions to the transformational education of the whole person. He distinguished between informational education and education that transforms a person from one state into another. Scientific education is informational, and religious education is primarily, but not exclusively, transformational. He referred to Islamic civilization to illustrate the complementary interaction of these two types of education. He showed how Islam is capable of providing a moral and conceptual attitude for both cultural and scientific development. He also suggested that other religions can also support informational and transformational education. Alternatively, the polarization of these two forms of education yields superstition, corruption and skepticism. Although Islam is not currently a leader in science and



technology, he referred to the historic contributions Islamic civilization once made to science (e.g., chemistry, optics, etc.), and encouraged a revival of investment in religious education.

**Şule Albayrak** discussed the recent shift in religion-state relations in Turkey in light of other OECD models. After a long debate over secularism in Europe, she noted that states have become more willing to participate in public discussions of religion's contributions to society. This has led to more cooperative models. Initially, the Republic of Turkey was heavily influenced by the French model of *laïcité*, but in the last ten years, the Turkish state has become much more cooperative with religion. In her presentation, she addressed the degree to which this shift was in tune with recent shifts in western models. She drew on the work of Ali Fuat Başgil who describes the evolution of three stages of religion-state relations in Turkey. In his terms, the first period was an era of state subjected to religion referring to the conventional approach of the Ottomans until the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The second stage is defined as an era of a semi-religious state which began with the declaration of *Tanzimat* and lasted until 1924. This period was perceived as the beginning of secularization in Ottoman administration as well as in the military and in education. New law schools, based upon the Western system of jurisprudence, were instituted. The co-existence of secular and Islamic courts as well as laws characterized the legal field at the time. Similar developments took place in the field of education, whereby religious schools co-existed with secular public and military schools that were opened particularly during the reign of Sultan Abdulhamid II. Başgil's third stage referred to an era of religion subjected to the state which began in 1924 and lasted throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century. As a scholar of the 20<sup>th</sup> century Başgil was unable to observe or predict how secularism would evolve in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Once the Republic of Turkey was established, religion became subject to the state with a strict replacement of Islamist institutions with secular ones. The principle of *laïcité* was added to the Constitution in 1937, and the educational systems became unified under a single secular system. The Caliphate was abolished on the same day that the educational system was reformed. The Directorate of Religious Affairs was expected to keep the religious demands of the public under control. The Directorate had no authority in determining the content of educational textbooks. The secular state also launched aggressive policies to westernize society as they cut ties with tradition and collectivism. Authorities instituted a Turkification of the call to prayer, erasing links with the past. Since its establishment, Turkey's democracy has been interrupted with military interventions and periods of religious discrimination. In 2005, the state began to

emphasize religious freedoms and the protection of religious minority rights. The state returned several seized properties to religious minorities, and has recently begun to allow religious instruction in public schools. This shift does not constitute an abandonment of secularization. Rather, she argued that the Turkish state is restoring a more inclusive secularism in response to its diverse religious populations. She concluded by saying that this shift is in tune with recent shifts in Western Europe toward a more cooperative model of religion-state relations.

**Blandine Chelini-Pont** spoke about the evolution of laïcité in France. In response to the recent increase in social hostilities, the Ministry of Education introduced a course in civic and secular education that teaches republican values as an educational response to increased terrorist attacks. The course pays particular attention to issues associated with privileged religious positions, hateful views of the younger generation against Islamic people (whether migrants or converts), the increase in fear, and the promotion of cultural development. Public teachers and other professionals understand the complex meanings of laïcité: The state practices neutrality in the delivery of public services and the state protects citizens' free expression, but the state also protects religious freedom, freedom of religious conscience and prohibits religious discrimination and incitement to hate. The Ministry of Education developed the course once it recognized that the concept of laïcité had never been explicitly taught and explained as part of the educational curriculum. In particular, it became important to communicate that neutrality of the state does not constitute obligatory neutrality for citizens. The French system is founded on freedom which can be eliminated by the rule of law, so the Ministry of Education considered it important to educate the citizenry, including immigrant religious minorities, so that they might fully understand the meaning and purpose of the laïcité system: To nurture religious co-existence, promote toleration for religious pluralism, create interreligious cohesion, and to help religions peacefully develop through the provision of the legal and cultural framework for co-existence. According to the Ministry of Education, the laïcité system does not promote interfaith dialogue, but it can secure and favor a cultural attitude of mutual benevolence and solidarity among religions. The new course is obligatory. The civic aspect attempts to develop a strong affection for the republican political model where the source of power is the people. The course is a political lesson that communicates the importance of citizenship. The secular part of this course presents republican values in combination with universal values as described in the declaration of human rights. The course includes a long development of the value of liberty,

equality before the law, and the value of fraternity. The course expects teachers to address religious stereotypes and build a positive view of others. France is responding to increased terror attacks through a statesmanship that calls on citizens to be responsible for the unity of the nation rendering laïcité more inclusive and more attentive to religious pluralism with the strong educational goal of advocating respect, tolerance and peace for all. She concluded by stating that this approach permits responsible people of all religions in France to build a powerful network capable of sustaining the peaceful aspects of French society.

**Ana Maria Célis** spoke about how changing religion-state relations is affecting the framework of education in Chile. Latin America has a tradition of having religion classes. Chile has public, private and a type of voucher system where the state gives funds to private schools. In 2015, Chile passed three reforms that impact the school system. School owners have to provide more information to the government including a formal declaration of their organization's religious orientation. There are 9000 schools in the country, and almost half indicate they are religious/denominational. She talked about differences in people's perceptions of the school system and actual school conditions. Another reform is that students can now choose which school they want to attend and if students or families do not share the institutional mission of the school, they can change where they attend. The fact that there are more confessional schools than students means that questions will emerge in relation to admissions as this law goes into effect. It will be increasingly difficult for schools to be confessional in light of the diversity represented by the student body. Religion may be taken out of public schools in a country that has a history of collaboration between religion and education. The process of privatization raises questions about the role of the state. These legal reforms represent the first time that the word secular has been incorporated into Chilean law. She talked about how, in this context, the term 'secular' has a different meaning from what it means in other national contexts. In Chile, 'secular' schools still say in their mission that they appreciate Christian values. When you have to establish separation, how does the meaning of religion change? She discussed several possibilities including changes such as the state allowing religious institutions to own their buildings. In conclusion, the greatest challenge to religious education in Chile, given the recent reforms, is how to maintain an environment where the particular religious identity can be recognized within the school.

**Key Points Made:**

- *The Toledo Guiding Principles on Teaching about Religions and Beliefs in Public Schools* (<http://www.osce.org/odihr/29154>) is useful to people interested in adopting a human rights perspective for teaching about religion in the public school system
- The polarization of scientific informational education and religiously-based transformational education yields superstition, corruption and skepticism, whereas the integration of informational and transformational education contributes to human flourishing
- A more inclusive and collaborative secularism model is emerging in Turkey and Western Europe that is more responsive to its diverse religious populations
- French laïcité is evolving to incorporate the intentional education of French citizens about the meaning and purpose of the system through a mandatory course in republican values
- Recent reforms in Chile have begun to establish the separation of religion and state; the reforms are creating challenges that threaten maintenance of the religious ethos of religious schools

## **RELIGION, HEALTH AND WELL-BEING**

**Description:** This session focused on medical ethics and ways in which faith-based approaches to drug treatment plans might make a positive contribution to sustainable development.

Moderated by Mehmet Juan Navarro Floria (Law Professor, Pontifical Catholic University of Argentina; Past President, Latin American Consortium for Religious Freedom, Argentina), speakers were Javier Martínez-Torrón (Professor of Law and Director of the Department of Law and Religion, Complutense University, Spain), M. İhsan Karaman (President, Istanbul Medeniyet University; Past President, Turkish Green Crescent Society, Turkey), İlhan İlkılıç (Professor, Chair, Istanbul Medical Faculty, Department of History of Medicine and Ethics, Istanbul University, Turkey), Angela Wu Howard (International Legal Fellow, The Becket Fund for Religious Liberty, USA), and Tuğba Erkoç (Medeniyet University, Turkey).

### **Presentations Overview:**

**Javier Martínez-Torrón** focused on the conflict between law and morality in the provision of health services. Abortion, and more recently also euthanasia, are examples where medical experts may experience a conflict between religious or moral beliefs and their professional obligations to deliver medical services in state hospitals. In the West, abortion was decriminalized years ago, but a number of legal systems have gradually changed and have made abortion a right for a service provided free of charge by the state. He spoke about the ethical side of the medical profession and how there are a number of practitioners as well as religiously

inspired organizations that oppose participation in practices such as abortion or euthanasia, which they consider profoundly immoral and against human life and dignity. He described a variety of positions that can be taken to resolve conflicts between law and morality, from blind obedience to the law to conscientious objection. Positions supporting rigid enforcement of the law for civil servants is often based on their choice to work for state health facilities; if they have troubles with the morality of their work—it is said—they are free to seek employment elsewhere. From a similar perspective, in countries where public health services are provided through private institutions, refusal to perform abortion procedures can result in the institution being removed from the list of institutions getting public service support. He critiqued this position as going beyond the original understanding of medical professions as preserving life and alleviating pain to an extended notion of health services that instead permits the termination of human lives. This approach ignores the sanctity of human life and addresses the medical procedure as a purely technical issue. He spoke about the importance of duly protecting the fundamental right to freedom of religion or belief and therefore recognizing the right of medical professionals to live in accordance with their moral convictions without having to make drastic changes in their lives or renounce their jobs. Medical professionals represent a well-educated group of people with high moral standards. Even from a merely pragmatic perspective, he questioned the wisdom of excluding financing from religious organizations just because they oppose some types of newly conceived health treatments; one of the factual consequences of such an exclusion would be leaving parts of the population—often the most vulnerable—without proper medical care.

**M. İhsan Karaman** spoke about the contributions faith-based approaches to addressing addictions might make to the public health SDGs. He described the social costs associated with the detrimental effects of tobacco, alcohol and drugs on public health. He stressed the importance of adopting evidence based approaches when developing a policy response to addictions. Faith based approaches and practices have proven rather successful. Addiction disrupts people's will. Religious traditions elevate human dignity and the importance of individual will. Support of faith-based approaches help people get rid of addictions. At an international symposium on addictions in 2014, evidence was presented of successful faith-based addictions programs operating in Yemen, Iran, Poland and the Balkans. Last year, the World Health Organization recognized a Muslim approach to addictions as good practice. Given the growing evidence that

faith-based addiction programs are effective, he encouraged support of this approach to addiction treatment as a strategy for fulfilling the public health components of the SDGs.

**İlhan İlkılıç** reflected on the types of ethical principles that contribute to the resolution of ethical challenges that occur in multicultural medical contexts. Principles may arise from a cultural practice that may be unfamiliar to the medical team. What is an adequate ethical way of dealing with these things? Broad patient autonomy approaches that are based on human dignity claim universal validity for all cultures and intercultural contexts. But patient autonomy is not universal and self-determination may not be central in every culture. Family autonomy must also be respected. He proposed a new integrative particularist approach for intercultural settings that emphasizes culturally sensitive communication with the patient and his or her relatives. He recommended that the conventional patient autonomy practice be reconsidered to reflect the patient's particular cultural value system.

**Angela Wu Howard** focused on several American legal cases as a way of talking about a broader conceptual problem regarding the way human rights conflicts are approached, in general. For example, she described the Michael Morales case. In 2006, he was two hours from execution for raping and murdering a 17 year old girl. The protocol required the presence of physicians to monitor him to ensure that he not be subjected to unnecessary pain. Anesthesiologists were appointed, but they refused to participate. The execution did not happen and he remains on death row. Although the death penalty is mandated by law, the state of California could not find a means to its end for administrative, rather than ethical, reasons. This technocratic legal process does not adequately respond to the needs of whole human beings. She also discussed the case of the Hobby Lobby business where socially conscientious employers objected to being mandated to provide health benefits inclusive of birth control to employees. She discussed how in this case, the broader governmental interest of providing contraception had another means available; instead of forcing the employer to provide contraceptives, they could just deal directly with the people instead of going through the employer (the least restrictive means). There are major tensions in how these cases are decided. She provided a final example to illustrate how the rights balancing approach to the law is inadequate because it excludes moral ethics by not incorporating the religious ideas of the people. For the growing numbers of people who are

increasingly identifying as ‘religious nones,’ they would have a responsibility to develop some way other than religion to speak of the value of human life outside the rubric of rights balancing.

**Tuğba Erkoç** spoke about how three different religions approach death. Although there are religious exceptions, most religions, she said, prohibit killing and teach that human beings are sacred. These teachings influence how death is addressed in medical contexts. She referred to the Karen Quinlan case of 1975 where doctors refused a request by Karen’s parents, Joseph and Julia Quinlan, to disconnect her respirator which they believed constituted extraordinary means of prolonging her life. This case raised many important questions in moral theology, human rights and euthanasia such as: Is removing a respirator murder or assisted suicide? Is being alive different from being a living person? This case affected the practice of medicine and law around the world. A significant outcome of her case was the development of formal ethics committees in hospitals, nursing homes and hospices. How does religion address questions such as these? What does it mean to have a beautiful death? Is a suffering patient seeking euthanasia seeking a way out of life or stealing the role of the Creator? She recounted Talmudic teachings that contribute to opposition to euthanasia in Judaism. In 2005, active euthanasia became prohibited in Israel accompanied by certain legal ‘do not resuscitate’ provisions. The Christian tradition has systematic teachings prohibiting suicide and the taking of human life as a sin against God. Pope John Paul II distinguished between euthanasia and treatment, indicating that the patient has a right to refuse treatment. According to the Islamic tradition, people are to be patient toward death with the understanding that the spirit is a temporary gift that can be taken back by God at any point. The Qur’an teaches that killing is a crime. Supporters of euthanasia argue that living a life that is not befitting is problematic, so the sacredness of life can be interpreted differently. She concluded noting that, in recent times, people are less likely to leave death in God’s hands.

**Key Points Made:**

- Religious freedom should protect the right of medical professionals to live in accordance with their moral convictions without having to make drastic changes in their lives
- Faith-based approaches to addressing addictions can contribute to the public health components of the SDGs
- A rights balancing approach to the law excludes moral ethics by not incorporating people’s particularistic religious ideas

- Since patient autonomy is not universal and self-determination may not be central in every culture, a particularistic approach that respects family autonomy may be useful for intercultural settings

## **POVERTY ALLEVIATION AND RELIGION**

**Description:** This session focused on the work of faith based organizations involved in poverty relief and development. Moderated by Mine Yıldırım (Head of Freedom of Belief Initiative, Norwegian Helsinki Committee, Turkey), speakers were Asher Maoz (Dean, Faculty of Law, Peres Academic Center, Israel), Adnan Ertem (Directorate General of Foundations, Turkey), Laki Vingas (Former Representative of Minority Religions, General Directorate for Foundations, Turkey), Selim Argün (Faculty of Theology, Istanbul University, Turkey), and Amina Demir (ZAKAT Foundation of America, USA).

### **Presentations Overview:**

**Asher Maoz** spoke about the G'Mach spiritual tradition of offering interest free loans within Jewish communities. G'Mach means 'acts of kindness' and refers to a communal or private fund that offers loans on flexible terms to either wealthy people with cash flow problems or poor people. The loan assists borrowers to maintain financial stability in business without asking for a hand-out. He then developed a theological position on religious freedom. He concluded by saying that Judaism does not recognize freedom of religion for its members. It does sanction, however, freedom within religion.

**Adnan Ertem** [translation pending; presented in Turkish]

**Laki Vingas** [translation pending; presented in Turkish]

**Selim Argün** spoke about the Waqf as the most institutionalized form of indigenous Islamic philanthropic charitable organization in the Muslim world. All Abrahamic religions offer an established mechanism for wealth transfer to look after the poor and needy peoples in their respective communities. Since one of the major themes of the G20 meetings is sustainability, he focused on the relationship between poverty alleviation and the Waqf. He spoke about how the Waqf differs from other modern NGO approaches to poverty alleviation. The Waqf, under Islamic law, must be a revenue bearing freehold asset. The income generating mechanism that is attached to the Waqf guarantees the longevity of the institution which is why there are Waqfs that outlive dynasties and kingdoms. The regular income for the goals and objectives of the



endowment secures the independence of the institution. Waqfs are financially independent sustainable institutions by definition because of this mechanism.

**Amina Demir** spoke about the work of the ZAKAT Foundation of America, an international charity focused on meeting immediate needs and ensuring self-reliance of the poorest people around most of the world. In one month alone last summer, the organization provided 6 million meals in over 40 countries. They distribute emergency food aid in places such as Bangladesh, Cambodia and Jordan. Some of the places where they work include providing for Syrians living under conflict along the Macedonia-Serbia border, ministering to Rohingya groups from Burma seeking refuge in various locations in India and Bangladesh, assisting Gazans under siege, providing for groups affected by the Nepal Earthquake, reaching out to rural communities in Africa, assisting refugees crossing Europe, and helping survivors of the Pakistan-Afghanistan Earthquake. She identified how the Jewish tradition teaches devotees to be generous to the poor. In 2014, 32 member organizations pledged \$1.5 million to ZAKAT for use in their relief and development efforts. She described how they also collaborate with local groups to address poverty where they are located in Chicago. This presentation provided a glimpse into the types of contributions made by faith based organizations toward poverty eradication.

#### **Key Points Made:**

- Although not all religions advocate freedom of religion, those that do not may advocate freedom within religion
- Faith based organizations, such as the ZAKAT Foundation, channel private capital towards poverty relief and development

#### **RELIGIOUS HERITAGE PROTECTION**

**Description:** This session focused on the destruction of multilayered religious heritage sites and the complexities associated with their protection and management. The session was moderated by Peter Petkoff (Director, Religion, Law and International Relations Programme, Regents Park College, Oxford and Brunel University, United Kingdom). Speakers were Emre Öktem (Professor of Law, Galatasaray University, Turkey), Leonard Hammer (Adjunct Professor of Law, Rothberg International School, Hebrew University, Jerusalem; Andrea and David Sein Visiting Chair in Modern Israel Studies, University of Arizona, USA), Tahir Mahmood (Founder Chairman, Amity University Institute of Advanced Legal Studies, India), Nikos Maghioros (Assistant Professor of Canon and Ecclesiastical Law, Faculty of Theology, Aristotle University

of Thessaloniki, Greece), and Tuğba Tanyeri Erdemir (Middle East Technical University, Turkey).

### **Presentations Overview:**

**Emre Öktem** explained and critiqued the religious logic behind the Daish (ISIL) destruction of pre-monotheistic religious heritage in Iraq and Syria. He then offered a counter-religious logic rooted in Islamic tradition. In recent years, Daish has intentionally destroyed pre-monotheistic remnants of ancient civilizations under the pretext that this heritage was idolatrous, not Islamic, and against the spirit of prayer. Their sect teaches that if they encounter objects that have been used for idolatry, they must be destroyed. There is a double standard, however, in that many of these artifacts have been smuggled through Turkey and sold on the black market to fund their operations. Their behavior illustrates the inherent conflict between their rigid religious ideology and the intransigent realities of life. After critiquing the selling of archaeology under a façade of Islamic legality as hypocritical, he presented an alternative Islamic perspective regarding the destruction of archeological heritage. He identified seven chapters in the Qur'an where the text invites Muslims to contemplate and learn from the ruins of ancient civilizations. Destruction of this heritage prevents devotees from doing their Islamic duty to contemplate what these civilizations did to result in their destruction. He provided several examples to expound upon his argument.

**Leonard Hammer** critiqued the existing international infrastructure that is currently relied upon for protection of cultural heritage and suggested possible avenues to address these shortcomings. The international organizations (e.g., UNESCO, World Heritage Convention, etc.) tend to be state-centric, emphasizing individualism and universalism over communal particularism. And yet, religious and sustainability concerns often prioritize particular communal situations that are context specific. The biases of the international organizations result in patterned exclusions where the grassroots organizations most concerned about protection of specific sites are systematically excluded from the decision making processes that decide their fate. This way of handling the process represents an inherent problem to the international approach to holy sites that contributes to the increased politicization of these areas. Development of soft law may provide an avenue for allowing protection of holy places. The NGO Search for Common Ground has proposed different codes of conduct for how to deal with holy sites, an example of the particularities presented by grassroots organizations that often get lost when using international

instruments. The international courts have arguably begun to shift away from universalistic individualism to allow for broader action and a more group orientation of freedom of religion to recognize the nexus between the act that is being asserted and the belief itself.

**Tahir Mahmood** spoke about how religious heritage is being destroyed in the name of religion, in the Muslim world and in India. In the Hejaz region of western Saudi Arabia, for example, several sites associated with early Islam have been destroyed over the last two decades for being 'idolatrous.' He spoke about how Muslim holy sites belong to a diverse international Muslim community of believers; one particular sectarian group should not have the right to destroy this religious heritage. In India, there is much religious diversity with millions of religious sites belonging to many different traditions. The crux of tensions in India, as in many other countries, is related to the bimodal distinction between indigenous and foreign religious traditions. Despite 1500 years of religious heritage in India, Christianity and Islam are still considered foreign religions in India. Colonial history exacerbates interreligious differences in ways that make protection of religious heritage difficult. After 1947, India implemented a qualified secularization that amended the Constitution to state that every citizen has the duty to respect the common cultural heritage of the country. This has been interpreted to include religious heritage. Given the tension between indigenous and foreign religions, 15 August 1947 was chosen as the decisive date for determining which religious site belongs to which community. There remains, however, widespread belief that mosques and churches are built on sites of ancient Hindu temples. In 1991, a law was passed making it an offense to convert or destroy a religious site under the claim that the site belongs to them. The law was intended to prevent future continued reclaiming of sites, but it exempted the Babri Mosque in Ayodhya from coverage. The Babri Masjid demolition occurred in 1992. Although a legal framework for protection of religious heritage exists in India, implementation is limited due to enduring feelings of enmity between diverse groups. The period of 1998-2004 was particularly challenging in relation to the destruction of Christian sites. To resolve these difficulties, he concluded that religious groups should view religious sites as belonging to a common world cultural heritage.

**Nikos Maghioros** spoke about the distinctive strict and extensive legal framework for the protection of cultural heritage that is embedded in the Greek Constitution. In 2002, a detailed law was passed containing 75 Articles describing particularities for protection of specific sites. The

cultural heritage in Greece is quite complex, so the law needed to include different typologies specific to the diverse traditions dating from the prehistoric period. Legal debates in Greece center on religious tensions over state control of Mount Athos, and bureaucratic barriers to investment involving cultural heritage that involve land development, environmental management and urban planning. Mount Athos has been an Orthodox spiritual centre with continuous international living traditions since the 10<sup>th</sup> century. This remote peninsula in northern Greece is considered by millions to be one of the most sacred spots on Earth. The mountain contains approximately 20 monasteries that are inhabited by 1,400 monks and covers an area of 33,000 hectares covered by Mediterranean forests. Political authority was originally Byzantine, then Ottoman and now the Greek modern state. Religious authority has been shaped by tensions between the different Orthodox traditions. The project of “autonomy” of Holy Mountain promoted in 1913 by the Russian foreign policy was rejected by the monks and since it has been part of the Greek State, it has been self-administrated and is legally protected by international law, the Greek Constitution, the Charter of Mount Athos, Greek legislation, regulations from internal administrative organs, and the written and customary Athonite law that has existed for centuries. The Charter of Mount Athos is a law of superior formal force as none of its provisions may be modified or repealed by common laws.

**Tuğba Tanyeri Erdemir** spoke about the importance of understanding the emotional attachment of diverse constituencies of multilayered sacred sites. For example, multilayered cases like the Hagia Sophia which was built as a church, converted into a mosque and was turned into a museum, pose a significant challenge in terms of heritage management. When working with emotionally charged religious sites, it is imperative to think of multiple constituencies of each site, both in terms of heritage protection regimes and in terms of various national and international legal systems that the site is a part of. Not enough attention has been paid to understanding the sort of challenges that are associated with multilayered religious site management, especially in the very mobile and globally connected world of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. A specific challenge for Turkey, in this respect, is the heritage protection of non-Muslim sacred sites. After the tragic events of 1915 and 1924, many of the Christian sacred sites were separated from their religious communities. Although the primary constituencies of these Christian sites are currently globally dispersed, they still retain a strong emotional connection to the sacred sites that were built by their ancestors. The management and protection of religious heritage requires

more than the specialized attention to the physical building. Decision making processes of multilayered sites must integrate the emotional dimension to ensure that the site brings peace instead of further conflict. Emotionally charged sites are often places of great contestations, symbolizing the dominance of one religiously defined group over another. It is our challenge to overcome this, and try to understand ways of utilizing them as locales of peace-building. For that, positive examples need to be studied in great detail.

### **Key Points Made:**

- Religiously inspired destruction of cultural heritage can be delegitimized with alternative religious constructions that unmask and delegitimize hypocritical practices
- Existing international frameworks for protecting religious heritage marginalize particularistic community concerns in ways that contribute to the politicization of multilayered religious sites
- Shifting away from universalistic individualism toward a more inclusive approach that recognizes particularistic group orientations is a more promising way to govern multilayered sites
- Maintaining the distinction between indigenous and foreign religious traditions is legally problematic for the governing of multilayered sites
- In the Greek Constitution, particularistic law has been developed to meet the needs associated with complex multilayered religious sites and is given priority over generalized law
- The management of multilayered religious sites in the mobile 21<sup>st</sup> century must integrate the emotional dimension of religious history if it is to responsibly ensure that the site brings peace instead of further conflict

### **RELIGION, ENVIRONMENT AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT**

**Description:** This session focused on responses to the environmental crisis and the need for sustainable development within specific religious traditions. Moderated by David H. Moore (Wayne and Connie C. Hancock Professor of Law, Brigham Young University Law School, USA), speakers were Dominico Sessa (Representative of the Holy See, Turkey), Yoshinobu Miyake (Superior General, Konko Church of Izu, Japan), Sayyid Ibrahimul Bukhari (Founder and Chairman, Ma'din Academy, India), and İbrahim Özdemir (Director General, Department of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of National Education, Turkey).

## **Presentations Overview:**

**Dominico Sessa** represented The Holy See to reiterate the fundamental importance of caring for the environment, particularly at this point in history. The concern of the Holy Father in this respect has been masterfully noted in his encyclical *Laudato Si'*. The encyclical takes its name from an invocation of St. Francis of Assisi. He noted that the earth is our common home and is like a sister that shares our existence, and like a beautiful mother who embraces us in her arms. This reference to St. Francis also indicates the sentiment on which the entire encyclical is founded—that of prayerful contemplation. As the encyclical affirms, St. Francis is the example par excellence for that which is weak to live with joy and authenticity. St. Francis modeled an inseparable concern for nature, for justice toward the poor, and for peace. The question which is at the heart of the encyclical is: What type of world do we want to pass on to the children who are now growing up? According to Pope Francis, the answer to this question cannot consider the environment in isolation from questions about the values that are at the foundation of civilization. For what purpose are we in this life? To what end do we labor and struggle? Why does this earth need us? If we don't consider these question deeply, the Pontiff says, our ecological concerns will not lead us to important results. The factual observation is that the earth, our sister, is being mistreated. She mourns and her groaning points to all the poor and dejected upon the earth. Pope Francis invites everyone into an ecological conversation to change our course and work toward care of our common home. Pope Francis recognizes that there is a spreading awareness of the earth's suffering. Based on this increased recognition, the Pope maintains a guarded hope for the possibility of changing the course we are now on. Humanity still has the capacity to work together to build our common home. Although human beings are capable of extreme degradation, they are also capable of choosing a different way for themselves. Pope Francis places at the center of the encyclical a conversation of hope rooted in the concept of holistic ecology as a paradigm to articulate the fundamental relationship between the person and God, between himself and other human beings, and between himself and all of Creation. Humans should not consider themselves as separate from nature, but as part of it, in it and through it. It is fundamentally important to look for holistic solutions that take the interaction of ecological and social systems into consideration. They are not two separate crises: one for society and one for the environment. Rather, it is one single complex societal-environmental crisis. The standards, norms and guidelines for solutions require a holistic approach to combat

poverty, restore dignity and care for nature. Using this framework, the encyclical speaks of the intimate relationship between the poor and the fragility of the planet. The encyclical critiques power and the forms of power that derive from technology. He said that the encyclical speaks of the need for sincere and honest debate that recognizes the intrinsic value of each creature, addresses the culture of waste, and develops policy that proposes a new lifestyle reflective of a new understanding of the economy and progress. The encyclical responds to impact science, without entering the scientific debate itself, to articulate the grave moral responsibility humans have to do all within our power to resolve the negative effects climate change has upon vulnerable people. The encyclical closes with prayers for sharing with other religions and for sharing with Christians. Humanity is face-to-face with the need to place environmental policies on the international agenda. Pope Francis responds to these needs with a pastoral heart.

**Yoshinobu Miyake** brought a Shinto perspective to dialogue with those from Abrahamic traditions about environmental problems. He described how the Christian tradition teaches that humans have dominion over the environment. Since the majority of religion in Europe was Christianity, the book of genesis has been used, until recently, to endorse human rule over the environment. A stewardship approach has recently emerged alongside the classical interpretation of human domination over Creation. Although the Apostle Paul (Romans 8:22-24) says that the whole of Creation waits in eager expectation for God, this passage may be interpreted in two ways: The one who holds nature in subjection is God, or those who hold nature in subjection are people. If Scripture is interpreted to say that humans have done this, then humans also bear a responsibility for mending the world. Either way, he described how a Christian conception of the relationship between God and nature contributes to an exemptionalist perspective of humans having a special existence apart from nature. This is where the crucial difference emerges between the Abrahamic religions and the Japanese approach. Whereas Abrahamic traditions teach that God is greater than humans and nature, the Japanese model teaches that nature is greater than humans and divine. The Japanese have lived continuously for 15,000 years on small islands, amidst a fragile environment affected by earthquakes and typhoons. Kyoto became the capital in the 8<sup>th</sup> century and the area is still surrounded by greenery. The different cultural teachings affect how people relate to the environment. For example, 15% of Turkey is covered in green, 33% of Canada, 48% of Russia, and 67% of Sweden. Japan is 68% covered in green forest despite being a small, well-developed country. Finland is the only country with a higher green

coverage ratio than Japan. He then linked these ratios with cultural heroes from the different civilizations. For example, the first human written text from Mesopotamian Clay tablets tell of a Sumerian King Gilgamesh who affirmed deforestation of Lebanon's cypress trees because he opened the land. The story of Noah's ark also justifies deforestation. He identified a linkage between these first cultural heroes and practices that deforest the land over time. To this day, the Middle East has no forest. By way of contrast, the first cultural hero in Japanese myths from Japanese texts is of Susanoh in a divine kingdom with a bad attitude. Because he interfered with other deities' cultivation, he was kicked out from heaven and sent to earth where he found a mountain without trees. He pulled out his hairs to plant trees and that is how so many trees came to Japan. This hero taught a diverse approach where different trees are planted and used for different purposes. The people welcomed this cultural hero to be their holy king. Japanese culture emphasizes the continuous planting of trees with respect for the environment. There are other ways in which the Abrahamic tradition differs from the Japanese tradition. For example, Abrahamic religions express concern for justice, truth, and goodness but the Japanese don't think of such things. When the huge tsunami hit Japan and killed 20,000 people and other sentient beings, the English explanation was that the tsunami killed humans. The Japanese say that 20,000 people were lost, not killed, because nature is considered to be neutral. For example, a lion does not kill a gazelle; rather, the Japanese say that the gazelle was eaten by a lion. Tragic things just happen. He concluded with a final example from the Shinto tradition that illustrates a sustainable approach to the environment. The Ise Grand Shrine in Japan is a unique shrine to the highest Sun Goddess deity that is rebuilt every 20 years since ancient times. An exact replica is built next to the old shrine. Once the copy is completed, the old shrine is collapsed and a new exact replica is rebuilt on the old site. This has been done for thousands of years and is an idea similar to the idea of DNA's sustainability.

**Sheikh Sayyid Ibrahimul Bukhari** spoke about sustainability and harmony as prime concepts that have been considered in India for centuries in the Al-Hadid and the Holy Qur'an. The sustainable development concept affirms life and affirms the natural environment. He spoke about how human activities should support employment and human activities, and should not compromise economics and natural systems now, or in the future. The focus on sustainable development provides an opportunity to refresh the relationship between human beings and the environment. Men and women, rich and poor, neighbor and stranger—each and every human



being, regardless of color, creed and gender, have an obligation to create harmony and balance in their neighborhood, society, country and in the world. He then discussed the work of his academy that, since 1997, has been doing educational and social work to uplift their community in South India. The mission of the academy is to promote the message of tolerance and harmony. He described the rich historic legacy of religious co-existence in Malabar. The academy has initiated a harmony initiative as a call to respect differences and special beliefs.

**İbrahim Özdemir** spoke about the making of the Islamic Declaration on Global Climate Change, and how it was received in the world. He presented an Islamic perception of environmental sustainable development. He discussed environmental problems as a root cause of the world's greatest problems including climate change, deforestation, erosion, floods, drought, hunger, racism, migration international and domestic terror, human rights violations, human trafficking, economic inequality, and even nihilism. When understanding conflicts in the Middle East and domestic and international terrorism, he talked about the importance of taking climate change and attempts to control fossil fuel resources into consideration. Fossil fuel dependence fuels international conflicts. The impact of religion on the landscape has been documented since the beginning of civilizations from identification of sacred animals and places to food taboos and establishment of religious calendars. One of the most powerful, but least appreciated, aspects of religion is how it provides people with a sense of meaning and purpose. In addition, religion uses cultural capital to project moral authority. If religions become included as part of solution, large numbers of people will be able to contribute to sustainability. He discussed the potential role of religion in education underlining the importance of creating new educational curricula to respond to these problems (e.g., investment, creation, sacredness of nature, economic teachings that help in building sustainable practices, prohibitions against the overuse of farmland, critiques of consumption, etc.). Educational curricula should be designed to serve the common good. The Pope's encyclical and its worldwide positive reception on one hand, and the 2015 United Nations Climate Change Conference in Paris on the other, encouraged Muslim environmentalists from different continents, countries, and backgrounds, to draft "The Islamic Declaration on Global Climate Change" in early June, 2015. The Qur'an's insistence on the order, beauty and harmony of nature implies that there is no demarcation of what nature manifests to us and what the Qur'an teaches as a value system. He then described development of an Islamic declaration that was prepared and sent to leading Muslims for consultation. The drafting committee included

professors from universities in Malaysia, the United Kingdom, Turkey, Saudi Arabia, Morocco and Indonesia. The initial draft was circulated widely for consultation to all major Muslim scholars and environmentalist for review and comments. They held a symposium on the subject in Istanbul and invited experts and members of NGOs to debate and discuss the declaration to broaden ownership from the Islamic community around the Declaration. Senior international development policy makers, leaders of faith groups, academics, and other experts attended the symposium. As Muslim scholars, they wanted to further exemplify the trend of faith-based climate activism ahead of the U.N. climate change summit in Paris. In this spirit, they called on 1.6 billion Muslims to engage on the issue of climate change and take bold actions to stem its worst impacts. The declaration states that there is deep irony that humanity's "unwise and short-sighted use of these resources is now resulting in the destruction of the very conditions that have made our life on earth possible." They asked of themselves, "what will future generations say of us, who leave them a degraded planet as our legacy? How will we face our Lord and Creator?" The statement clarifies ways in which the Qur'an promotes environmental sustainability. The statement then calls upon the Conference of the Parties (COP) to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and the Meeting of the Parties (MOP) to the Kyoto Protocol taking place in Paris in December, 2015 to bring discussions to an equitable and binding conclusion, bearing in mind the scientific consensus on climate change, the need to set clear targets and monitoring systems, the dire consequences of inaction, and the enormous responsibility the COP shoulders on behalf of the rest of humanity, including leading the rest of us to a new way of relating to God's Earth. The statement calls on the well-off nations and oil-producing states to lead the way in phasing out their greenhouse gas emissions as early as possible and no later than the middle of the century; to provide generous financial and technical support to the less well-off to achieve a phase-out of greenhouse gases as early as possible; to recognize the moral obligation to reduce consumption so that the poor may benefit from what is left of the earth's non-renewable resources; to stay within the '2 degree' limit, or, preferably, within the '1.5 degree' limit, bearing in mind that two-thirds of the earth's proven fossil fuel reserves remain in the ground; to re-focus concerns from unethical profit from the environment, to that of preserving it and elevating the condition of the world's poor; and to invest in the creation of a green economy. The statement asks nations and financial institutions to make specific commitments to affirm environmental sustainability. Finally, the statement calls on all

Muslims to humbly take full responsibility for a sustainable future. He then described the overwhelmingly positive reception of the declaration. Major newspapers, magazines, social media and leading environmentalists expressed their appreciation of and support for the declaration. Bill McKibben, a leading environmentalist and activist said that although "by itself this declaration will not lead to much as Islam, for better and for worse, lacks a central governing body; there is no Pope, what they signal is an ongoing shift in the zeitgeist, to the point where most thinking people in our civilization realize that we have to take dramatic, even 'radical,' action to blunt an emerging crisis. This is new" (McKibben, 2015). As Syed Hossain Nasr noted, "the main value of the declaration will be to remind Muslims that nature is not just a machine; it has a spiritual meaning." Muslims, therefore, have the responsibility of developing an environmental ethic which motivates and leads them toward a more meaningful and responsible attitude towards planet earth and sustainable development.

### **Key Points Made:**

- The Holy Father, Pope Francis, has responded with a pastoral heart to the need to place environmental policies on the international agenda in his encyclical *Laudato Si'*
- One of Japan's first cultural heroes reforests the land and Japan has one of the highest percentages of green cover of all developed countries
- Civilizations whose cultural heroes are deforesters have lower percentage of green cover
- An Islamic Declaration on Climate Change has been issued, widely circulated, and well received by the general public

### **NGO PANEL – YOUTH AS ADVOCATES OF SOCIAL & INTERFAITH COHESION**

**Description:** This session focused on diverse interfaith dialogue programs involving youth in a variety of contexts. Moderated by Kishan Manocha (Senior Advisor on Freedom of Religion and Belief, Human Rights Department, Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights, Poland), speakers were Lejla Hasandedic (A Common Word Among the Youth, Akdeniz University, Antalya, Turkey) Jana Jakob (A Common Word Among the Youth, Uppsala University, Sweden), Rawaad Mahyub (Business Development Director, Right Start Foundation International, United Kingdom), Hany Abdulmonem (Youth Programme Director, World Organization of the Scout Movement, Malaysia), Katerina Khareyn (Youth Project Manager, KAICIID Dialogue Centre, Austria), and Anas Alabbadi (Programme Officer, KAICIID Dialogue Centre, Austria).

### **Presentations Overview:**

**Lejla Hasandedic** shared about interfaith dialogue in the aftermath of the Bosnia-Herzegovina war. It was traumatic to grow up in this environment. She lost family members, hated others and developed intense stereotypes. Since the majority of Bosnians are Muslim, the majority of Croates are Catholic, and the majority of Serbs are Orthodox, the war developed along religious as well as political lines. When she was 12, Lejla became a youth leader and got involved in peacebuilding efforts. Although youth are often discouraged from leadership opportunities, she spoke about the advantages youth bring to leadership roles when prejudices run deep within a culture. Young people have new ideas, they are energetic, they are familiar with social media technologies, they travel, and they are more open-minded because they are still learning. Although they, too, have stereotypes, their views are not as deeply ingrained as older members of society. She described the United Religion Initiative's multi-faith program and recounted her experience as a Youth Ambassador. Rather than meeting to dialogue about stereotypes and fears, the program places people from different faiths in teams that jointly investigate what a local community needs, and then implement together a project that makes a positive contribution to a neighborhood. When people of different faiths collect garbage together or assist aging members of the community, the experience humanizes participants even if they don't become close friends. The program develops skills in nonviolent communication, empathy, and active listening.

**Jana Jakob** provided excerpts from multi-faith storytelling workshops held in Swedish schools. Sweden has become one of the most secularized countries in the world. Secularization trends have resulted in religious practice being viewed as 'outdated' and unsuitable to enlightened human beings. Between 2010 and 2014, there has been a 66% increase in anti-Semitic hate crimes, an 81% increase in Islamophobia, and a 244% increase in Christian hate crimes. A Swedish school quality inspection of religious education concluded that the existing curricula does not sufficiently challenge prevalent prejudices nor does it sufficiently take into consideration the needs and interests of students; religion is simplified, objectified and alienated so that even religious students do not recognize themselves in the content. In their workshops, they use a storytelling approach to challenge stereotypes, introduce critical thinking, and build interfaith understanding. She spoke about the importance of speaking about the positive forces associated with religion which are aspects that are underreported in Swedish media. Building interpersonal

interreligious relationships was presented as an effective strategy for reducing religiously based hate crimes.

**Rawaad Mahyub** presented a grassroots model of working with young people around interreligious dialogue and action, and identified key elements for people working in this field. Since 2003, they have focused on several social issues from drugs and unemployment to education and violent extremism. They also brought diverse people together to dialogue about the cartoon crisis. They developed a social enterprise television show, the “Revivers Apprentice,” to develop positive and active young role models. He spoke about *A Common Word*, a bilateral Muslim-Christian interfaith initiative directed at academics and scholars that identifies common theological principles between the two religious traditions. Since 2009, they have extended this project to incorporate young people from 75 different countries, with *A Common Word among Youth (ACWAY)* to dialogue with multiple faiths and deliver action through grassroots projects to build interfaith understanding. The five key elements they emphasize for working with youth are: knowledge, understanding, action, hope and faith.

**Hany Abdulmonem** spoke about the Scout Movement, the largest youth movement in the world with 40 million registered participants from 160 countries. The scouting movement develops individual personal commitment, but it also facilitates a social dialogue of peace that impacts the broader culture. For example, every four years they host youth Jamborees that, in 2011, brought more than 40,000 youth together from around the world to develop active citizens to create a better world. The scout movement keeps track of service projects (<https://scout.org/worldmap#>). Scouts currently have contributed more than 630 million hours of grassroots constructive actions to build a civil society. Scouts can earn a KAICIID “Dialogue Badge” by incorporating interfaith dialogue into their lives. These are some of the ways in which the Scout Movement contributes toward peacebuilding.

**Katerina Khareyn** spoke about sports as a way to attract youth to engage in inter-faith activities. For example, Pope Francis used football to promote interfaith dialogue by organizing an Interfaith Peace Match in 2014. Sports promotes values such as loyalty, sharing, dialogue and trust in the other. These values bridge across differences posed by race, culture and religious belief. KAICIID developed a Trialogue Program that organized football matches in Austria for youth from three religious backgrounds: Christianity, Islam and Judaism. The program mixes

religious backgrounds within each team, connects youth to professional players, and educates participants about interfaith dialogue. The events were widely publicized throughout the community in Austria. They plan to expand the program to include women and refugees in the near future, and implement the program in other countries.

**Anas Alabbadi** spoke about the KAICIID Dialogue Center (<http://www.kaiciid.org/>) which is an intergovernmental organization (not an NGO) that was formed in 2012 by four governments – Austria, Spain, Saudi Arabia and the Holy See Vatican as a founding observer. It is unique in its governance nature in that it has a governmental council of parties with a board of directors that consists of religious leadership representative of five major religions: Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism, Islam and Judaism. This makes the organization open to channels of dialogue between policy makers and religious leaders. Although the organization does not advocate for a certain religion, it does advocate for dialogue among religions and cultures. They focus on peacebuilding in four conflict zones that have a religious dimension to the conflict. They also function globally to support the field of religious and intercultural dialogue. They partner with several international organizations and United Nations’ agencies (e.g., UNESCO, UNDEP, OIC, etc.). They also target, and partner with, youth for leadership development and empowerment. He presented information about some of the projects that they support. They take an inclusive approach, consulting youth, women, and religious leaders throughout project development and implementation.

### **Key Points Made:**

- In the aftermath of conflict, it is more effective to create interfaith teams that make contributions to neighborhoods together than to gather to talk about stereotypes and fears
- Youth bring many assets that make interfaith youth leadership development a wise investment
- Programs that strengthen interpersonal interreligious relationships is an important strategy in contexts of rising social hostilities
- Youth are innovating a variety of strategies to build interfaith relationships at the social level (e.g., scout interfaith peace patch, interfaith sports teams, television social enterprise competitions, etc.)

## **REGIONAL PANEL ON RUSSIA AND CENTRAL ASIA I**

**Description:** This session was conducted entirely in Russian. Moderated by James A. Toronto (Associate Professor of Arabic and Islamic Studies, Brigham Young University, USA), speakers were Roman Podoprigora (Professor of Law, Caspian University, Kazakhstan), Yertas Muratbekov (Director, International Centre of Cultures and Religions, Kazakhstan), Galym Shoikim (Chairman, Committee for Religious Affairs, Ministry of Culture and Sport, Republic of Kazakhstan), Lev Simkin (Professor of Law, Russian State Academy of Intellectual Property, Russia), and Dmitry Kabak (President, Open Viewpoint Foundation; Member, Panel of the OSCE/ODIHR Advisory Council on Freedom of Religion or Belief, Kyrgyzstan).

### **Presentations Overview:**

**Roman Podoprigora** spoke about how the attention of government and civil society is focused on sustainable development in Kazakhstan. The President and the Cabinet of Ministries has established special advisory bodies to address issues of sustainable development in the system of public administration. The state plays a much stronger role than civil society in promoting sustainable development. The existing model of relations between state and religious associations has limited public and social activity for religious associations, so the voice of believers and religious associations is very weak in Kazakhstan. When these relations were more liberal, there were many examples of joint successful projects in the field of sustainable development. He recommended that the state transition to a partnership model of church-religion relations, including a liberalization of legislation, if it wants to involve believers and religious associations in promotion of sustainable development. He also recommended that the state reject religious terrorism and extremism. He recommended that the state allow believers and religious associations access to the public sector and encourage the realization of joint projects in the field of sustainable development.

**Yertas Muratbekov** [translation pending; delivered in Russian]

**Galym Shoikim** [translation pending; delivered in Russian]

**Lev Simkin** [translation pending; delivered in Russian]

**Dmitry Kabak** [translation pending; delivered in Russian]

### **Key Points Made:**

- Religion-state models must shift to a partnership model in Kazakhstan if religion is to make significant contributions to sustainable development

## **SPIRITUAL CAPITAL AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT IN CHINA**

**Description:** This session focused on the role of spiritual capital in modern economic development in mainland China. Moderated by Zheng Xiaoyun (Deputy Director, Institute of World Religions, Chinese Academy of the Social Sciences, China) and Brett G. Scharffs (Associate Dean, Francis R. Kirkham Professor of Law; Associate Director, Brigham Young University Law School, USA), speakers were Yuting Wang (Associate Professor of Sociology, American University of Sharjah, United Arab Emirates), Shaojin Chai (Senior Research Fellow, Ministry of Culture, Youth and Community Development, United Arab Emirates), Nanlai Cao (Associate Professor of Religious Studies, Department of Religious Studies, Renmin University, China), and Lin Li (Director, Department of Islamic Studies, Institute of World Religions, Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, China).

### **Presentations Overview:**

**Lin Li** addressed what Islam contributes to China's economy. He described the historical waves of Muslim immigration into China and how normative attitudes toward Chinese Muslims has evolved over time. Although the Chinese immigrant community was once considered to be a foreign presence, in the People's Republic of China they are accepted as an officially recognized subculture of religious minorities. There are currently an estimated 13 million Chinese Muslims comprising ten officially recognized ethnic groups in the country. Drawing on the cultural capital theory of Pierre Bourdieu, he made the case for recognizing an evolving economic relationship between the subculture of Chinese Muslims and economic connections to the international Muslim community outside of China. There is an Islamic Economic Community (IEC) in China that contributes to the development of regional transnational economic relationships that are mutually beneficial to participating countries. In 2015 alone, China has created 163 investment projects in collaboration with the Muslim international community. He described the integration of Islam into Chinese culture with architectural illustrations of mosques and other buildings from various provinces within China. Given the significant economic potential presented by the Islamic Economic Community's transnational connections, he suggested that they be recognized as a substantial participant in the international Muslim community.

**Nanlai Cao** presented about the Chinese Christian diaspora by describing the immigration of Chinese merchants to France from Wenzhou, a coastal city popularly referred to by residents as 'China's Jerusalem.' China is home to one of the largest Protestant populations in the world (estimated at 40 million). Although China has a history of being an anti-religion state, there has been a religious revival in recent years. China's Christian transnationalism has contributed to the



international expansion of Chinese commerce. He described how a highly indigenized Chinese Christianity could migrate and become deeply embedded in a secularized European context. The ethnic trading community provided a transnational bridge and participation in Christian congregations embedded people in the community. In this way, he showed how Christianity played an important role in migrants' adaptation to dramatic socioeconomic changes brought about by transnational living circumstances. He drew on five years of interviews conducted during fieldwork in Paris and Wenzhou. He described the migrant church as a large civil society structure where the family, market and state intersect. He characterized the immigrant community as employing a bounded transnationality where the transplanted community retreated into a Chinese cultural enclave rather than assimilate into secular French culture. The migrant traders operate small businesses such as garment factories and restaurants. They trade in light industrial products across Europe. The diaspora actively expand their business networks thereby planting an indigenous model of Chinese life throughout Europe. Chinese merchants celebrate doing business as a celebration of authentic faith reconciling the conservative spiritual tradition of the Chinese house church movement with the utopian dreams of capitalist success. The Christian merchants emphasize an entrepreneurial logic of being resourceful and capable church members, particularly in the face of state pressures, whether in China or in France. They utilize an informal finance mechanism for both business and church development that operates significantly outside of the state sanctioned economic framework using house church and transnational immigrant networks. They practice a form of nonmarket morality that implies an elite responsibility to invest wisely in the community more than individualistic calculations reflective of capitalism. Their more collective approach to economic activity contributes to a more sustainable form of economic development.

**Shaojin Chai** discussed the religious revivalism of Confucian discourse in modern China, how it contributes to economic development and whether religious revivalism might continue to offer a platform for religious public engagement. Confucianism is a state ideology. For example, if you want to enter court politics, you have to pass a state exam on the Confucian canon. He discussed the core values of Confucianism and compared contemporary expressions to this ancient tradition. He reviewed the five cardinal virtues that impact social relationships (e.g., benevolence, justice, trust, wisdom, etc.). Without a transcendent notion of God, the Confucian approach differs from monotheistic faith-based organization in that it involves more of a

humanistic emphasis upon the self-cultivation of morally responsible behavior. Confucianism emphasizes harmony without uniformity when relating to other ways of life, so people may practice Daoism at home or Buddhism as academics, for example, in an eclectic multi-faith integration in Chinese life. Another example of syncretistic combinations are the ways in which Muslim Confucians operate within, and beyond, China as bridges between Confucian China and other Muslim countries. Confucian revivalism began in the late 1970s outside of China in places like South Korea and Singapore. Economic development in those countries was attributed to Confucian values' emphasis upon contributing to people's welfare. He described how Confucianism contributes to a smaller income disparity in these contexts by influencing CEOs to value employee respect for stature more than material wealth. Asian values are now recognized as contributing to economic redistribution among the populace in contexts such as Japan and Singapore. This relationship between Asian values and economic redistribution is not as clearly observed in mainland China, however, due to the value disruption that occurred during the Cultural Revolution. Recent studies indicate that some of the rural areas have managed to preserve traditional Buddhist values in places where family temples have been preserved. In these rural contexts, traditional values have been shown to operate as a moral check on corruption in rural governance. Should mainland China restore a more public presence of Chinese religions to reconstruct Chinese morality and national identity? Could an increase in religious freedom serve to legitimize the state by strengthening the rule of virtue alongside the rule of law? Is the increased religiosity in mainland China a by-product of the capitalist economy or does it represent a genuine revival of traditional values? This is one of several aspects of the current debate around the evolving religion-state relationship in mainland China.

**Yuting Wang** spoke about how mainland China has remained an officially atheist country with tight controls on religious activities despite its rapid shift from a planned economy to state capitalism. It is therefore timely and important to give particular attention on this occasion to interfaith relations in China by addressing the contentious issue of religious freedom. China has undergone tremendous social, economic and cultural changes since the 1980s. These changes, combined with the ideological vacuum left by the collapse of faith in communism and a shattering of the traditional Confucian moral system, have led to what many have termed a spiritual crisis in China as the root cause of rampant social vice. In the midst of growing concerns about this crisis, all kinds of religions have resurfaced and revived. Recent studies show

that the number of Chinese who exhibit some sort of religiosity is multiplying at an unprecedented level. Despite the fact that some of the growth results from changes in survey methodology in survey studies, the fact that much of the growth is found among the younger population suggests that there has indeed been a religious revival in China since the reform began. Protestantism, in particular, has gained such strong momentum in China that China is projected to become the country with the largest number of Christians by 2050. Accurate or not, there is no doubt that religion can no longer be dismissed as irrelevant or secondary in scholarly research on Chinese society and policymaking in China. It is within this context, that she presented her study on the role of religion in establishing, maintaining and developing social trust in business activities, linking the two seemingly contradictory variables together to show that religion is beneficial, rather than destructive, to China's economic development. Traditional Chinese society is based primarily on an agrarian economy in which merchants and traders were despised because frequent travels would cause instability in family life and their activities were deemed as a threat to morality and social order. Business was understood as worldly and devoid of sacred activity. Business activity was perceived as manipulative, cunning, and deceiving, with thought processes committed to minimizing costs and maximizing profits. A religious person, by way of contrast, was presumed to pursue a holy and spiritual life that was not focused on immediate this-worldly reward. This distinction has become more pronounced in modern China. From this perspective, the self-centered, rational calculation typical of business behavior appears incompatible with altruistic decision making behavior typical of religion. As China continues to liberalize its market, in what ways does religion dialogue with, rather than separate from, the business world? Her argument that religion is beneficial, rather than destructive, for China's economic growth is largely based on interviews conducted across China and in Dubai. She focused on Islam, in particular, because Islam teaches that conducting business is a noble act in contrast to the traditional Chinese attitude of mistrust. Islam considers business practice as an integrated aspect of everyday life where one's faith is tested in various ways. She described how Muslim minorities within China have strengthened ties between mainland China and the surrounding Muslim countries, acting as a bridge between countries with otherwise tenuous relationships. The role of religion can be understood as a form of social capital by examining how religion affects trust (e.g., interpersonal trust, system trust, cognitive trust, emotional trust, and diverse bases of trust). Trust is not only important to civil society and democracy, it is also

an essential component to business relationships. Trust reduces transaction costs and increases business efficiency. She concluded by noting that religiosity as social capital bridges the gap between China and the Muslim world through building trust and encouraging cross cultural communication.

### **Key Points Made:**

- Religiosity as social capital builds trust in business relationships
- Religious minorities strengthen transnational relations between mainland China and other countries in the context of globalization
- The religion-state relationship in mainland China is rapidly evolving in response to religious revivalism

### **WOMEN, FAITH AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT**

**Description:** This session focused on the relationship between gender roles, human rights laws, religious teachings and sustainable development. Moderated by Karen Hamilton (Secretary General, Canadian Council of Churches, Canada), speakers were Nazila Ghanea (Associate Professor International Human Rights Law, University of Oxford, OSCE Advisory Panel of Experts on Freedom of Religion or Belief, United Kingdom), Sherrie Steiner (Assistant Professor of Sociology, Indiana Purdue University Fort Wayne, USA), Anita Soboleva (Associate Professor, Faculty of Law, Department of Theory and History of Law, National Research University Higher School of Economics, Russia), and Lena Larsen (Executive Director, Oslo Coalition on Freedom of Religion or Belief, Norwegian Centre for Human Rights, University of Oslo, Norway)

### **Presentations Overview:**

**Nazila Ghanea** at the outset, sought to point out the distinction between discrimination based on religion or belief that draws from social hostilities and rights violations that stem from state restrictions. The two are linked. When the state is involved in discrimination, it signals to the general public that they can discriminate without penalty. That said, the distinctions should remain. When freedom of religion or belief is denied, the people within that jurisdiction are denied the freedom to explore the big questions of life. State involvement in discrimination prevents people from defining as members of that religion or belief, preventing them from having the necessary social space to organize, fundraise and contribute back to society. She then shifted her attention to how the discipline of human rights law considers the questions of ‘women, faith and sustainable development’, the theme of the panel. Human rights law considers

these as separate legal categories, with no explicit legal protection for women acting on the basis of their belief to promote sustainable development. Protections are provided separately for women, religion and development, but human rights law does not provide specific recognition of the interconnection between them. The Human Rights Defenders Declaration offers the strongest basis for protection of women of faith who are involved in sustainable development. This also raises the question of what the unique added value, or distinction, of the involvement of women of faith in sustainable development might be and, in turn, which rights need to be protected to support this. Is it the inclusion of women at the international level for the right of women to participate in policy formation and policy implementation in sustainable development (women's involvement in political life)? Or is it for the social support of women's involvement at the grassroots local level where they advocate for everyday life issues (e.g., education, health, etc.)? Do women act in a way that is closer to the community, less discriminating and more inclusive? In terms of peacebuilding and security, for example, Security Council resolution (S/RES/1325) on women, peace and security recognizes a qualitative benefit that women bring to peace negotiations and peacebuilding. Is there a qualitative benefit that women bring to faith and sustainable development? If so, we should be studying it in more detail, isolating out the gender factor, and speaking more about it. If it is true that there is a qualitative difference in how women do sustainable development when they act on the basis of faith, then what are some of the qualities they bring forward? Is it the empowerment of others, of consulting in a deeper way with the communities that are being engaged with, engendering trust and inclusivity, and living the notion of service in a more selfless way? If these are qualities emphasized more by women, then perhaps this is the direction to take further discussion. In sum, a deeper analysis of the themes of this panel 'women, faith and sustainable development' was called for, before it could be given clearer appreciation and legal protection.

**Anita Soboleva** spoke about a law under development to protect women in Russia from domestic violence. SDG goals support these types of protections for women. Since 1999, UN committee recommendations have consistently indicated that Russia needs to enact domestic violence laws. The Ministry of Interior estimates that 40% of violent crimes in Russia are committed within families and incidents of domestic violence continue to increase. In the absence of special legislation, these are considered private indictment cases leaving women on their own to move the case forward in the system. They have modeled their proposed law on

special legislation that was implemented in Kazakhstan and Moldova that resulted in a 40% decrease in crime. The Russian State Duma is expected to create some mechanism of protection for women next month. However, the legislation itself has not yet been introduced to the State Duma, in part, because public opinion is divided due to unanticipated strong resistance from Orthodox communities. Religious communities have denied the extent of the social problem, challenged the State's statistical data, and opposed development of new legislation claiming that adequate legal protections are already in place. Opposition considers the proposed law as 'demonizing' the family and inappropriately authorizing the state to intervene in private family matters. Without the law, victims of domestic violence must often continue living with their abusers because the legal system is not able to provide women with adequate protection. Judicial interpretation should be impartial and independent, however custom, tradition and religion has been affecting the judicial decision making as long as these are treated as private indictment cases. These weaknesses propagate continued treatment of domestic violence as if it were not a serious social problem, continuing disregard of UN committee recommendations. The State Duma will consider the issue in December.

**Lena Larsen** discussed how disagreement over the definition of religion frequently impedes adequate development of legal protections for religious freedom (e.g., Indonesia). She highlighted the importance of developing an understanding of religious freedom that is broad enough to protect the rights of nonbelievers. Inadequate attention to the diversity of religious traditions hinders sustainable development. In particular, she spoke about her engagement in a process that identified a theological basis and methodology for promoting an argument in favor of gender equality before the law within the Islamic tradition. A full explication can be found in the recent publication, *Gender and Equality in Muslim Family Law*, edited by Ziba Mir-Hosseini, Kari Vogt, Lena Larson and Christian Moe I.B., Taurus Publishers (A less academic, more publicly accessible, version for practical application is also available). Treating sharia law as a social construction, the publications deconstruct the patriarchal interpretations that result in the mistreatment of women and children and impede sustainable development. They then construct Islamic arguments for gender equality. These arguments are useful for garnering religious support for promoting gender equality in fulfillment of the SDGs.

**Sherrie Steiner** identified ways in which women of faith and faith communities are both making positive contributions to sustainable development, but the affirmation of a sustainability that affirms human flourishing requires adjustments to how gender roles are frequently lived out. The social construction of gender roles contributes to both the problem *and* the solution of the current crisis. Although women are more impacted by environmental degradation than men, when empowered, women tend to bring more stable and broad based changes to the community because of their caregiving roles in social relations and their responsibilities in everyday life. For this reason, investing in women has a multiplier effect for environmental sustainability. Historically, when women have exercised leadership roles in religious movement organizations, they have *partly embraced* and *partly subverted* dominant ideals about gender relations. Women often used their homes as basic organizing units within the movement, especially as a survival strategy during periods of repression and opposition from both organized religion and the state. Women negotiate their roles in a complex interplay between family, faith and the public domain. Although religious freedom may introduce an element of flourishing into the struggle for human survival, rigid gender role construction undermines the affirmation of life. Perhaps it is through women's ongoing subversive embrace of their place in the world that sustainable development becomes possible.

**Key Points Made:**

- Human rights laws currently treat women, faith and sustainable development as separate legal categories, so there is no explicit legal protection for women acting on the basis of their belief to promote sustainable development
- There may be a qualitative difference in how women do sustainable development when they act on the basis of faith such as relevance, the empowerment of others, of consulting in a deeper way with the communities that are being engaged with, engendering trust and inclusivity, and living the notion of service in a more selfless way
- In places such as Russia, religion has contributed to treating domestic violence as if it were not a serious social problem, continuing a disregard of UN committee recommendations
- There exists a theological basis and methodology for promoting an argument in favor of gender equality before the law within the Islamic tradition

- Although religious freedom may introduce an element of flourishing into the struggle for human survival, rigid gender role construction undermines sustainable development
- Perhaps it is through women's ongoing subversive embrace of their place in the world that sustainable development becomes possible

## **REGIONAL PANEL ON RUSSIA AND CENTRAL ASIA II**

**Description:** This session was delivered mostly in Russian. Moderated by James A. Toronto (Associate Professor of Arabic and Islamic Studies, Brigham Young University, USA), speakers were Gulchakhra Tulemetova (Associate Professor of the UNESCO Chair in the Comparative Study of World Religions, Tashkent Islamic University, Uzbekistan), Indira Aslanova (Head, Analytical Department, Center of Religious Studies, Russian Slavic University, Kyrgyz Republic), Zakir Chotaev (Deputy Director, State Commission on Religious Affairs, Kyrgyz Republic), and Yakov Asminkin (Director, TAHLIL Center for Social Research, Uzbekistan).

### **Presentations Overview:**

**Gulchekhra Tulemetova** spoke about the roles played by secular humanitarian and religious education in cultivating interfaith tolerance. Mutual misunderstanding of various religious confessions contributes to social tensions. She spoke about the importance of developing respectful attitudes towards both 'secularity' and 'religiousness' and how quality education about different religions helps students develop immunity against religious extremism and terrorism. She emphasized forbearance as teaching harmony in difference through the promotion of respect, acceptance and appreciation of the rich diversity of the world's cultures, the forms of expression and ways of being human. She talked about how forbearance is fostered through knowledge, openness, communication and freedom of thought, conscience and belief as implemented within the framework of the state laws. She discussed Article #4 in the Declaration of Tolerance which states that "education for tolerance should aim at countering influences that lead to fear and exclusion of others, and should help young people to develop capacities for independent judgement, critical thinking and ethical reasoning." She concluded that education should strive to maximize objectivity without compromising the deepest understanding of religious phenomena as a principle of tolerance in scientific and theological approaches in Religious Studies.

**Indira Aslanova** [translation pending; delivered in Russian]

**Zakir Chotaev** addressed the implementation of state policy in religious affairs in Kyrgyzstan from a government perspective. After the dissolution of the Soviet Union, different approaches



to state authority and religious society began to appear once Soviet countries proclaimed their political independence. Since 1991, the Kyrgyz Republic has provided a relatively free environment for the operation of religious organizations. He presented the official government position on religious affairs, and the limits of its influence, on sociopolitical affairs in the country. He then described current efforts toward reform of the state policy. According to the Constitution, the Kyrgyz Republic is a sovereign, democratic, constitutional, secular, unitary, and social state. The principle of secularism is described in the document (Article 7) as disestablishment and the separation of church and state relations. The Constitution also guarantees the freedom of conscience and religion and its expression (Articles 20, 32) making the Kyrgyz Republic one of the most liberal environments in the post-Soviet countries for the activities of religious organizations. There are additional detailed provisions such as forbidding religiously based political parties, prohibiting religious leaders from engaging in political activity during elections and prohibiting the religious promotion of hatred and social superiority. According to the government, several religious extremists have taken advantage of these liberal policies in ways that have contributed to social unrest. Several police arrests and raids were conducted to maintain social control. More than 85% of the population considers themselves Muslim. Since 2013, the government has launched a reform of religious affairs for purposes of sustainable development. He outlined several specific policies that were adopted last July that provide a methodological and conceptual base for a new approach for state policy toward religious affairs. The Constitution continues to affirm the principle of secularization, but it is context specific to the religious landscape of the Kyrgyz Republic. The reforms now recognize that the state government should provide circumstances to promote the moderate values of Islam to prevent the spread of extremist activity. Lack of sufficient information among citizens about religion and the historical low quality of religious education are considered contributing factors to extremist behavior, so reforms are committed to improving the quality of religious education as a strategic response to terrorist activities. Media coverage of destructive religious propaganda has also been identified as a contributing factor, so improved state cooperation with the media (e.g., provide correct, updated information and support for quality media coverage) is another strategic reform. The state values promotion of a balance between secularism and religious freedom. Religious organizations must be officially registered in the Kyrgyz Republic to be protected by law under the Constitution. As of October 2015, there are 2,814 officially registered

religious organizations in the Kyrgyz Republic. Of these, 2,422 are Islamic and 380 are Christian. The remaining organizations include Buddhist, Jewish and other religious organizations. There are unregistered religious organizations practicing illegally, but the state does not consider them to pose a national security threat. The state is currently monitoring 19 religious extremist/terrorist groups that pose a national security risk to the Kyrgyz Republic.

**Yakov Asminkin** focused his presentation, from a sociological perspective, on SDG Goal #16: Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions, and talked about the role religion and interfaith dialogue can play in creating effective institutions that support sustainable development in Uzbekistan. When the Soviet Union collapsed, Uzbekistan was ranked lowest in terms of quality of life. The population was quite diverse at the time, with more than 200 ethnic groups, yet Uzbekistan was able to maintain inter-ethnic harmony and build inter-religious dialogue in order to avoid the type of conflicts that have affected many of the neighboring countries in the region. Nowadays, more than 94% of the Uzbekistan population are Muslim. Nevertheless, there are more than 2,200 religious organizations that are carrying out their activities, relating to 16 different confessions including Islam, Christianity, Judaism, Baha'i, Buddhism, Hinduism and others. He spoke about the role *makhallas* have played in enabling communities to wisely address material assistance to the poor. A makhalla is a keeper of Uzbek traditions. It is an entire system of relations between inhabitants of one quarter, which has existed in Uzbekistan for centuries. A mosque or chaykhana is considered the center of a makhalla. Makhallas involve vulnerable groups in the social and spiritual life of a community, and they maintain control and order throughout the country. He said that sociological studies conducted over the past 20 years indicate widespread popular support of interethnic and interfaith harmony and state activities aimed at increasing the involvement of children in religious activities and preventing the incitement of interreligious strife. Measures taken by the government to prevent the activities of radical religious organizations, including organizations working under the cover of confessing Islam who recruit militants for terrorist organizations, are given especially positive assessment by the population.

**Key Points Made:**

- The state government of the Kyrgyz Republic is initiating legal reforms to promote the moderate values of Islam and provide quality religious education to the citizenry as a strategic response to the spread of extremist activity
- Educational approaches emphasizing tolerance should strive to maximize objectivity without compromising the deepest understandings of religious phenomena

## **HUMANITARIAN AID ORGANIZATIONS AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT**

**Description:** This session identified similarities and differences between faith based and humanitarian organizations engaged in sustainable development. Moderated by Rachael Kohn (Producer and Presenter, ABC's the Spirit of Things, ABC Radio National, Australia), presenters were Peter Howard (Senior Director of Emergency Response, Food for the Hungry, USA), Talia Pura (Canadian Women for Women in Afghanistan, Canada), Vahet Görmez (Bezm-i Alem Waqf University, Turkey), and Sharon Eubank (Latter Day Saints Charities, USA).

### **Presentations Overview:**

**Peter Howard** identified, from a Christian perspective, six characteristics of a faith-based response to humanitarian crises: 1) Faith communities understand the sacredness of life and the dignity and transcendence of each person. Development tends to focus on the lowest common denominator, but a response that understands people as created in the image of God can engage with the other person with greater honor and think of rights in terms of abundance and community. 2) Faith has a powerful presence, bringing to bear one of the strongest sustainable global networks anywhere in the world. With this global presence comes global faith assets such as people, networks, buildings and other resources that become critical in emergencies. It usually takes development agencies 72 hours to get on the ground in the humanitarian world, but the local temple, mosque, or church can immediately respond to those in need. Faith leaders will say, "the church was here before the disaster, during the disaster, and they will be here when you all leave." 3) Faith communities represent a voice of conscience to the international response because they have their finger on the pulse of need in the communities where development agencies engage. They can ensure that the voice of the most vulnerable is heard if they speak into the United Nations and the international humanitarian response network. 4) Faith offers a redemptive narrative of hope in the midst of suffering. Because of the sacredness and transcendence of life, suffering can be redeemed. The Christian tradition teaches that God suffers

with us and will one day redeem the earth's groaning and the groaning of those who suffer. Hope is critical in the midst of disasters and for social psychological care in the midst of trauma. 5) Faith brings a theology of forgiveness and mercy which can stop cycles of violence. 6) Faith brings values based on sustainable charitable giving that is not forced, tax-based giving. Faith also inspires people to give of their time. Volunteers often give with greater heart than if they are hired for a paycheck with a three month contract. He then identified several challenges for faith-based development agencies: 1) A perception of (and sometimes actual) engagement in proselytism during times of emergency when people are particularly vulnerable. He suggested that the faith community embrace standards such as those practiced by the Red Cross. 2) There is a lack of coordination and segmentation among faith-based organizations that results in a loss of collective impact. To counter these challenges, he recommended that agencies build on their strengths. FBOs can confront the challenges of proselytization and segmentation by engaging and speaking the language of the international community and adopting The Red Cross Code of Conduct. Second, FBOs can agree that aid will not be used to further any political or religious standpoint. If love is free, then it is not practiced as a way of achieving other ends. He quoted the Holy Father who said that those who practice charity in the Church's name will never seek to impose the Church's faith upon others because they realize that a pure and generous love is the best witness to the God in whom they believe and by whom they are driven to love. He closed with reference to Micah 6:8 "[God] has shown you what is good and what the Lord requires of you. To act justly, to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God." Justice, mercy and humility are three pillars of how a humanitarian response can be engaged in from a faith perspective; these pillars also distinguish FBOs from the more secular organizations. Walking humbly with God and subsequently with others, can transform our humanitarian response from a material rights based activity of physical aid to a sacred act of faith that is worthy of the dignity and the transcendence of those we are called to walk with in their suffering.

**Talia Pura** spoke about how volunteer participation in small grassroots NGOs can make a sustainable difference in people's lives by describing the work of Canadian Women for Women in Afghanistan (<http://www.cw4wafghan.ca>). Canadian women raise funds in support of teacher training, teacher salaries and student supplies (e.g., student-centered science kits) for use in schools and rural home-based literacy programs in five provinces of Afghanistan. Although they are a small NGO, they have trained an estimated 5000 teachers in Afghanistan since their

founding in 1996. Since 2008, they have provided 202 library starter kits with 500 books each to schools in rural areas. In 2014, they funded two schools for orphaned children and children of widows with a total of 612 students. They consider the education of women as a way to change the educational landscape of the entire country.

**Vahet Görmez** spoke about the humanitarian charitable work of Doctors Worldwide ([www.doctorsworldwide.org](http://www.doctorsworldwide.org)). They are an independent, privately funded organization that recognizes the importance of cultural, religious and universal humanitarian values. They link medical expertise with cultural knowledge and values to build capacity, empower local communities, and produce effective solutions that will leave a lasting legacy long after they are gone. Although they aim to respond to emergency situations around the world, their main focus is to design and implement evidence based long-term healthcare projects for the poor through low-cost high impact interventions. The organization was founded in 2000 in the United Kingdom by an international group of medics who had witnessed the Balkan conflicts. They first expanded to Turkey with a branch that has since become independent as Doctors Worldwide Turkey. They opened a branch in Pakistan in 2009, a branch in Somalia in 2011, branches in Kenya and the Congo in 2013, and a branch in Palestine last year. They help local communities develop, build and sustain health services such as maternity clinics and hospitals. They partner with a variety of organizations such as FEMA, UNICEF, several universities and the Turkish Red Crescent. Doctors travel at their own expense, bringing medications with them, to vulnerable parts of the world, spending their holidays to alleviate suffering among the poor. They also assist with local training of professionals, provide financial support for physicians' salaries and train traditional local birth attendants in these regions. In keeping with their attentiveness to culture, values and religion, they have developed a distinctive training program for trauma reduction in children. They recently piloted a program to train teachers to deliver eight sessions of psychological support to children shaped by deeply disturbing experiences. The psychosocial support significantly reduced the anxiety scores in traumatized children. Doctors Worldwide has been asked to deliver the program to 17,000 children in Gaza, but funding for offering psychosocial support remains a challenge.

**Sharon Eubank** spoke about the history of, and her work with, the humanitarian arm of the Latter Day Saints (LDS) church. The first major LDS project began 30 years ago when they

raised ten million dollars for African famine relief. Since that time, they have become a faith-based organization that completes about 1000 projects in 100 countries per year. She spoke about the benefits and prejudices associated with doing humanitarian work as a faith based organization. A barrier to their work is the widespread perception that they use their humanitarian projects to proselytize. Although the LDS has organized their humanitarian work separately from their proselytism, they have a “brand of white shirts and ties” that creates a problematic public perception. A lot of her work is directed toward educating LDS church members about the importance of maintaining the separation between the humanitarian and proselytism aspects of LDS outreach. She identified a basis for humanitarian engagement from within the Mormon tradition. A second barrier to their humanitarian work is segmentation. She talked about the discernment challenge faith based groups face when protecting their particularistic identities even as they join together with other religious traditions in service to the common good. She talked about divisive commitments to doctrinal red herrings that dilute the collective power of people to join together for humanitarian relief. In 2011, Ban Ki Moon held a conference at the United Nations in recognition that perhaps the UN had excluded faith based organizations too much. Since the largest organizations engaged in practical work among the most vulnerable are the faith based groups, he decided to bring them into the humanitarian development community to develop greater mutual understanding. She then spoke about the potential for even greater work if faith based organizations were to take a curriculum tool, such as that described by Brian Grim (<http://religiousfreedomandbusiness.org/empowerment-plus>), and work collaboratively for the common good. She then provided an example of multi-faith collaborative community engagement involving refugee resettlement in Salt Lake City. She talked about how people come to their most holy place when they have been traumatized. She provided another example from Post-World War II Europe to illustrate how multi-faith collaborative work can address the need for spiritual healing and reconciliation in traumatized communities. She concluded by emphasizing the importance of protecting the spiritual heart that motivates faith-based organization workers to engage in humanitarian aid. FBOs should not be required to follow the secular model.

**Key Points Made:**

- A faith-based approach to development understands that life is sacred, accesses global networks with assets, represents a voice of conscience, advocates for the most vulnerable,

offers a redemptive narrative of hope, bring resources that can break the cycle of violence, and inspires voluntary engagement

- Faith-based approaches to development encounter problematic associations of proselytism toward their work with vulnerable populations, and they are often segmented from others with a subsequent loss of collective impact
- Faith based organizations would benefit from adopting The Red Cross Code of Conduct and agreeing that aid will not be used to further any political or religious standpoint
- Small NGOs can make a difference at the micro level as is happening with the teacher training of women program of Canadian Women for Women in Afghanistan
- NGO approaches that respect the emotional commitments of people, such as Doctors Worldwide, can offer psychosocial support for traumatized children in conflict zones

## **DIALOGUE AMONG CIVILIZATIONS**

**Description:** This session focused on principles for inter-faith dialogue and action for the development of civilized communities. Moderated by Frederick Axelgard (Senior Fellow, Wheatley Institution, Brigham Young University, USA), speakers were İlhan Yildiz (President, International Association for Understanding Explaining Mohammad, University of Ankara, Turkey), Daniel C. Peterson (Professor of Islamic Studies and Arabic, Department of Asian and Near Eastern Languages, Brigham Young University, USA), James T. Christie (Professor Whole World Ecumenism and Dialogue Theology, University of Winnipeg, Canada), and Ajay Aggarwal (Leicester Council of Faiths, United Kingdom).

### **Presentations Overview:**

**Ilhan Yildiz** spoke about the evolution of the Turkish legal framework in relation to religious minorities. Freedom of religion did not initially make minority faiths any more protected. The situation of non-Muslim minorities are complex in light of the legal framework. Turkey's legal framework was based on the Treaty of Lausanne. The initial legal framework was interpreted to not equally protect all religious minorities. Religious minorities had no income from the state and this created unresolvable problems because of the disconnection between the legal framework and the religious leadership of the communities. The non-Muslim minorities that were present, but not recognized, in Turkey during the treaty were the 15,000 Syrian Orthodox Churches, the 25,000 Catholic United Churches, the 2,000 Syrian Catholic Churches, and the Roman Catholic Church. Later, in order to meet European membership requirements, the Turkish government declared that the Armenians, Greeks and Jews could buy and sell property.

The government allows religious minorities to use their buildings for worship services, but minorities are not allowed to use their buildings for fundraising or educational purposes. He discussed the barring of particular religious minorities from opening churches. Even though religious minorities were given some rights, they still have to live under prohibitions. Until recently, he talked about how it has been impossible to talk about religious freedom in terms of both minority and majority churches. The institution of religious freedom in Turkey is likely to change soon. Turkey has wanted to become part of the European Union for a long time, but only recently has membership actually become a possibility. In order to meet European laws, Turkey will need to give language and other rights to Kurdish people, lift media restrictions, adjust many of the local laws and consider a proposal that allows all minority religions to have freedom of religion. Unlike previous law, this law would not list the permitted foundations by name. Turkey has made substantial progress and the state has shown a commitment to increase freedom for all religions. He concluded by saying that Turkey is a model for all countries interested in adopting democratic legal frameworks that protect the rights of minorities to peacefully co-exist.

**Daniel Petersen** discussed why investing financial capital in inter-religious dialogue promotes sustainability. Civilizations are often religiously defined. Even secular Europe is increasingly defined by its lack of religion. The opposite of dialogue is tension or actual war; it is much easier to demonize people with whom we do not talk or understand. He talked about the wastefulness of war, and why capital investment in dialogue makes good business sense. It is difficult to make business plans if countries are on the brink of war. Even the threat of instability makes trade relations unpredictable and affects investment patterns. He provided examples from the Middle East to illustrate his point that political and ideological barriers interfere with human flourishing. He quoted Hans Küng who said, “No peace among the nations without peace among the religions. No peace among the religions without dialogue between the religions.” Surely, he said, we are more aware of this now than at any other time in history. He offered three guiding principles for developing inter-religious understanding. First, he said, if you are going to learn about another religious tradition, go first to those who love it, not to its enemies. Learn what it is they find of value in it. The second principle is to always compare your best to their best; never compare your best to their worst. If you want to look at villains, look at villains on both sides and always leave room for holy envy. Identify something that tradition does extremely well that can be incorporated into one’s own life in some way. A third principle is drawn from St. Francis of



Assisi, “Seek first to understand, then to be understood.” He encouraged people to find out what it is about this tradition that speaks to people. He concluded with a comment about the shortcomings of emphasizing tolerance. Instead, he advocated an approach that values what other people have to teach. No movement lasts a long time unless it speaks to people in some way. If a movement has lasted a long time and attracted a substantial number of followers, there must be something within it. Recognize that you don’t understand the tradition until you understand what it is that people within it value. If you come away saying, “Only an idiot could believe it,” yet for 1500 years, numerous people who demonstrably are not all idiots have adhered to the tradition, perhaps you have missed something and the problem is yours rather than theirs. He offered the following quote from the Qur’an: “We have given a law and a way of life to each of you. Had God wanted, God could have made you into one nation. But God wanted you to compete with one another and God will tell you the truth through your differences.” God could have made us all one, he said, but God didn’t precisely so we could learn from one another. Interfaith dialogue is not just a way to peace. It is also a way to grow. Tolerance should be replaced with appreciation of differences so that people see what they can learn from others to deepen their own traditions.

**Ajay Aggarwal** spoke about the role interfaith dialogue plays in promoting community cohesion. It has been well established at the policy level that interfaith dialogue is good for getting people from diverse traditions to work together at the grassroots level. The concept of community cohesion has become very important for policy makers in the last ten years. Interfaith dialogue builds social capital which heals fractured communities. He discussed how intergroup contact between people of different faiths can break down prejudices and barriers. As relationships form between those of different faiths, people share their time, energy, resources and skills to improve the local community. Interfaith interaction has an important role to play in building community cohesion by strengthening bonding and bridging social capital. He then spoke about the work that Leicester Council of Faiths is doing in a diverse small impoverished city of 300,000 people in the United Kingdom where the majority of the population is composed of minorities. Migrants herald from places such as Somalia and Romania. In 2011, 44% of people there identify themselves as Christian, 11% as Muslim, 47% as Hindu and the rest are Sikh, Baha’i and Jainist. The heterogeneity has made it difficult to promote dialogue among the faith communities. He described tensions between the various ethnic communities. He then

discussed the intentional efforts that are currently underway by Leicester Council of Faiths to create dialogue groups as a way of establishing a bridge between the different faith communities.

**James T. Christie** began with a Cree greeting and a Jewish Midrash story where a student asks why humans share a common ancestry. We have common grandparents, so the story goes, in order that no one person may see themselves as superior to another. The remainder of his comments, he said, built on that premise. He spoke of how Istanbul has historically provided safe haven for people fleeing religious persecution. In 1492, for example, Ferdinand and Isabella began the expulsion of Jews and Muslims from Andalusia, Spain, which marked the end of this multi-faith 'ornament of the world.' Many of these people fled to Istanbul. He told the story of the Turkish government's purchase of Jews from the Nazi regime during WWII to smuggle them through Turkey to freedom in Palestine. He spoke of Turkey's current immense support of refugees. Istanbul is a city which has hosted many civilizations, yet has remained one city. Civitas serves as the root for the word 'civilization.' He spoke about how the Old Testament and Midrash begins in a garden but culminates in a city, and that city is meant to be the place where civilization comes together dominated by civility. If Istanbul is for the moment the world, what type of civilization is being modeled here? He suggested five things. First, an interreligious application of the Swedish Lund Principle which affirms that religious groups should act together in all matters except those in which deep differences of conviction compel them to act separately. Issues of violence, women, warfare, and the environment challenge the human community. An Interfaith Lund Principle would enable the global community to face these problems together and facilitate a dialogue that envisions an entirely new model of global civilization. He said he does not know what it would look like except to say that it wouldn't look monolithic as digits on a census form. Development of a world community does not mean the end of nations any more than orchestras mean the end of violins. Second, an Interfaith Lund Principle must be inclusively built on dialogue from Shinto to Christian to Buddhist in order to learn to live that which we already know. Third, he spoke about the implications of the teaching that the earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof. Fourth, he talked about the importance of humility and eschewing tolerance except that it is better than intolerance. Fifth, he talked about appealing to the golden rule which is extant in every faith tradition. He then discussed developing changes in religion-state relations. The parallel G8 Interfaith Summits ran from 2005-2012 and were focused on the Millennium Development Goals as a way of speaking to the

whole human family, whether religious or not. Now the Sustainable Development Goals represent the hallmarks of a civilized society. He encouraged a collective seeking of applied hope. We must pray as though everything depends on God and live as if everything belongs on us. The harder I work, he said, the more often I find that my prayers are granted. He concluded with one last story. Twenty five years ago, on the west coast of British Columbia where the oceans meet rocky beaches, an individual took out a small boat and went fishing. The fog set in and didn't lift for 36 hours. The coast guard couldn't find him. Family couldn't find him. Friends who were still waiting on the beach, saw him drag his boat up a rocky shingle. The media made a big deal of his survival. "How did you survive out there in the fog on the open sea, alone, with such an uncertain future?" In response, he said, "Well, I just kept rowing until the tide turned."

### **Key Points Made:**

- Turkey offers a model for countries interested in adopting democratic legal frameworks that protect the rights of religious minorities to peacefully co-exist
- Investing financial capital in inter-religious dialogue promotes sustainability and makes good 'business sense'
- Some guiding principles for inter-religious dialogue principles are 1) learn first from those who love the tradition, 2) always compare your best to their best, 3) identify something that tradition does extremely well that can be incorporated into one's own tradition, and 4) seek first to understand, then to be understood
- An interreligious application of the Swedish Lund Principle, which affirms that religious groups should act together in all matters except those in which deep differences of conviction compel them to act separately, might be useful for a strategy of applied hope in fulfillment of the Sustainable Development Goals

### **REGIONAL PANEL ON INTERFAITH IN THE ASIA-PACIFIC**

**Description:** This session illustrated non-European models of interfaith cooperation. Moderated by Paul Morris (UNESCO Chair in Inter-Religious Understanding and Relations, Victoria University of Wellington, New Zealand), speakers were Keith Thompson (Associate Professor, School of Law, University of Notre Dame Sydney, Australia), Asmi Wood (Senior Lecturer, College of Law, Australian National University, Australia), and Upolu Luma Vaai (Senior Lecturer and Department Head, Department of Theology and Ethics, Pacific Theological College, Fiji).

## **Presentations Overview:**

**Keith Thompson** spoke about a particular interfaith Australian project, the Study of the Economic Impact of Religion on Society (SEIROS). Although Australia's Constitution begins with references to God, Section 116 denies the Commonwealth the power to establish a national church. Many commentators thus consider Australia to be a secular state, although there are also constituents that remain unsatisfied about the degree of separation. Although there is literature on quantitative studies identifying causal links between religious activity and social outcomes, the existing research in this area is very specific to the countries studied and not necessarily generalizable to the Australian context. Contrary voices questioning the relationship between religious activities and social outcomes are increasing and such voices are felt by religious organizations to threaten the future of all organized religion in Australia, so the Latter Day Saints Church commissioned Deloitte Access Economics in 2013 to conduct a scoping study as to the economic impact of religious activities in Australia. The study looked to establish quantitative causal links between religious activities and social outcomes in Australia that, if found, could quantify the fiscal savings to government that flow from various kinds of religious activity. The SEIROS project of interfaith cooperation is drawing upon the pioneering work of Professor Ram Cnaan at the University of Pennsylvania as its intellectual watershed. Following the 2013 meeting, an ecumenical and inter-religious board was formed to determine which studies should be undertaken and to raise funds to cover the costs of the study. The data set, which is in progress, is expected to establish the extent and value of volunteerism in Australia with less than a 5% margin of error. The most significant part of what they are doing is embedded in the interfaith cooperation underpinning the project. Despite assaults they feel coming from militant secularism, they are building on commonalities using data and economic analysis to potentially ensure that organized religion continues to be a mediating institution in liberal western democracy. More than that, this research project is a template for interfaith cooperation.

**Asmi Wood** began with the indigenous tradition of recognizing the hosts of the land where the meetings were held, grateful for their hospitality, and then he spoke about people-to-people local engagement from the perspective of indigenous peoples from Australia. He spoke about the purpose of interfaith dialogue in the local setting. Interfaith dialogue develops a network of relationships in better times that can be drawn upon during times of strife so that the community will come together rather than split apart when they suffer. Dialogue creates links between

people. He told several stories of different religious communities locally coming together during times of international conflicts to quiet extremist reactions and diffuse the strong and harsh dichotomies that appear in the press. He also addressed how media amplification of particular events can create partial and extremist responses in the community. Interfaith responses can nuance reactions so that the pain of one group will not be privileged, or diminished, in relation to another. The formal dialogue process can also provide a more nuanced point of contact for the media so that what needs to be said, gets said. Interfaith dialogue provides someone that the press can call, who can speak on behalf of the broader community so that there is some moderation in the news coverage that provokes less of a backlash. The dialogue process also facilitates interfaith scholarship for people to develop the hermeneutics of their own various religious texts to provide more moderate interpretations for the broader community to access when confronted by the simplistic black and white extremist interpretations. He concluded with reference to the wisdom of an elderly Aboriginal woman who links interfaith understanding and dialogue to how the darkest of the dark night in the Aboriginal bush cannot extinguish the ember that survives in the fire at the end of the night.

**Upolu Luma Vaai** critically analyzed how religion has historically played a huge role in nurturing an oppressive system in the Pacific, then reconstructed a more suitable, context-specific approach. He described what he referred to as the One Truth Ideology that has Christian roots in Greek logic, is entrenched in Western culture and promoted by Western philosophies. When this approach was introduced to the Pacific, it suggested that there is only one solitary God who rules, and it promoted uncomfortable relationships with other religious traditions. This notion suggested that the cultural or religious system that best expresses this solitary ruling God should also be treated as universal. This contributes to the reduction of everything into one and is a problematic contributor to increased poverty, environmental degradation and violence in island communities. The Pacific is more than 70% Christian, so this universal monarchy of the one God ideology supports a foreign system of life to rule the communities. The neoliberal economic system is very complex, but it has nevertheless become a comfortable home for the One Truth Ideology to flourish even though most indigenous people in the Pacific are not aware of this connection. Local governments have convinced the majority of people that this global economic system is the only approach that can sustain the well-being of the nation, despite well-being being defined solely on economic and scientific grounds (to the exclusion of Pacific religious

and moral motivations). Such an approach is unsustainable because it introduces a system that disturbs four basic Pacific harmonies: harmony with the divine, harmony with self, harmony with others and harmony with the environment. The market seeks only to strengthen economic relations based on a master-servant relationship. He quoted Jonathan Osorio who contends that the Pacific Islands may be beneath the notice of industrial and commercial nations as producers, but they are not beneath the notice of their armed forces, and their need for harbors, airfields, missile ranges, lucrative mining rights, farms, and fisheries. Such attractions may draw billions of dollars in foreign aid, but they also diminish Pacific Islanders' independent economic development as well as their political sovereignty. The limited resources of the islands are continually being extracted by logging, fishing and mining companies of the rich countries. Approaches to climate justice have been very top down, often benefiting wealthier countries at the expense of the most vulnerable smaller islands in the Pacific. He then began to reconstruct a positive alternative as the Pacific Islander contribution to interfaith dialogue, harmony and sustainable development. He described how some Pacific Islands, such as Vanuatu, have implemented a more relational system of well-being entrenched in their indigenous religious culture as the most economically secure and sustainable way to address poverty and economic injustice. In the Pacific, religion cannot be separated from culture. Relationality is the overarching moral value that encompasses the majority, if not all, Pacific cultures. The Pacific has not lost the axiom, 'I belong, therefore I am.' Pacific islanders relate in order to be, they do not 'be' and then relate. He further explicated their worldview describing aspects involving empathic connection, mutual respect, and communal interconnectivity with so-called 'others.' He described how, in their worldview, the opposite is not a conflicting opposite. Rather, the opposite is a *relational* opposite. In this sense, with the growing attention of postmodernity and the uncertainty associated with the epistemological centers of the world, he suggested that minor-narratives be regarded as truth-bearing. He asked attendees to avoid making the mistake of excluding one in favor of the other as is dominant in the One Truth Ideology. Truth, he said, is not fixed, but is featured by the different contextual conditions. Therefore, all narratives have significance. Religious freedom is only genuine, he said, when it acknowledges diverse narratives as truth bearing and respects community protocols and codes of behavior. To the extent that the One Truth Ideology is hegemonic, it hinders religious freedom, human development and creativity by excluding, rejecting, and killing the other in favor of a more

universal idea of truth. The Pacific relational approach suggests that both individual and community, both male and female, both Western and Pacific, both Christian and non-Christian should be embraced as a collaborative way forward. Religion has a lot to offer development, but if it is to be sustainable, it must deconstruct a colonial religious system that promotes oneness at the expense of diversity. The Pacific Conference of Churches, in collaboration with civil society, governments and NGOs, recently advocated a rethinking program to decolonize all spheres of life, challenge the dominant One Truth Ideology, and propose a more relational grassroots framework to underpin policies, religion and economic development in the Pacific. He then posed a question and challenge to participants in the G20 Interfaith process: Can the One Truth Ideology that has become the basis of some oppressive economic development systems, be challenged and/or confronted by these G20 Interfaith Summits? How can the minor narratives be given significant attention in this process?

**Key Points Made:**

- The SEIROS project of interfaith cooperation being developed in Australia is forging new ground by engaging many faiths in their effort to use data and economic analysis to build on commonalities to potentially ensure that organized religion continues to be a mediating institution in liberal western democracy; all of the faith groups recognize that they will be affected if they cannot identify to government the socioeconomic difference they make to Australian society
- Interfaith dialogue develops a network of relationships in better times that can be drawn upon during times of strife so that the community will come together rather than split apart when they suffer
- Given the dominance of monotheistic traditions in interfaith dialogue, attention needs to be paid to provide greater attention to minor narratives in the dialogue process

## ANNEX

### WELCOMING REMARKS

**Recep Şentürk** (Director, Alliance of Civilizations Institute, Turkey) began the meetings with a moment of silence in recognition of people from all parts of the world who have suffered violence. Perhaps gatherings such as this, he said, can help to heal these wounds. He then thanked everyone for honoring people with their presence. This is a good cause whose purpose is to remind the world that the issues discussed at the G20 meetings from an economic perspective are not enough. Attention must also be paid to the religious and cultural dimensions of civilization. Istanbul is a significant location because it has always been a center of different religions who have lived in peace for several centuries. The meeting here is an extension of that legacy and heritage. The Alliance of Civilizations Institute has a rule that half of the students must be from outside of Turkey. By bringing students from all around the world, this establishes at the micro level the dialogue we are talking about.

**Musa Duman** (Rector, Fatih Sultan Mehmet Waqf University, Turkey) also gave condolences and condemned the Paris, Ankara and Beirut terrorist attacks. He said that these are the times when we need cohesiveness against these types of actions. The G20 countries are focusing mostly on economic interests. How can we couple economic interests with sincerity? The G20 are making decisions regarding other parts of the world. He encouraged them to think of the welfare of the global community and how their decisions impact other countries.

**Bekir Karliğa** (Chief Advisor to the Prime Minister and the Head of United Nations Alliance of Civilizations National Coordination Committee, Turkey) spoke about the educational program at the Alliance of Civilizations Institute. Today, the world has a civilizational problem both in the Islamic World and in the West. He spoke about how we all need a new civilization. The Alliance of Civilizations Institute now has more than 130 countries involved in the program. Turkey is the only country with a university that is dedicated to this type of graduate training. The university was established to support the Alliance of Civilizations initiative. Courses are taught in four languages—Turkish, English, Spanish and Arabic. Half of the students in the program must come from abroad.



## KEYNOTE DINNER SPEAKERS

**Rahmi Yaran** (Mufti of Istanbul, Turkey) offered greetings and then prayers for the shared meal. He spoke about the importance of the social institution of the family. He also spoke about prioritizing spiritual dynamics and passing on values to the next generation in addition to paying attention to economic issues. One of the spiritual values we need in a happy and prosperous society is justice. A government without justice cannot survive. He spoke about how Allah has ordered us to be just and fair and to give to our families and friends. Justice means treating everyone, including enemies, honestly and fairly. He also spoke about the importance of offering mercy to humans and other life forms, sharing in a fair manner, maintaining honest markets, and practicing honest state administration (executive, legislative and judicial) that operates in the interests of people. He concluded with comments about maintaining peace and harmony. He spoke about the importance of respecting the beliefs, and traditions of others.

**Metropolitan Emmanuel** (His Eminence, Metropolitan Emmanuel, France) spoke about the recent terrorist attacks in France that claimed the lives of 129 people and hurt close to 400 others, and the events in Ankara and Lebanon. He spoke about the weakening of democratic foundations and the challenge terrorist attacks present to the dignity of civilized peoples. He said that we are all called to stand with the French people in their pain and prayers, and to engage in loving dialogue. He said that the people who did the terrorist attacks are neither civilized nor religious. It is not possible for us to speak about religion, he said, without sharing a common understanding of human dignity. We need to rediscover the meaning of faith. He spoke about accepting responsibility for the ethics of sustainable development. The environment is in crisis, and the word crisis calls upon us to correct systemic problems including changes to lifestyle. A challenge sets things in motion. How can we think of sustainable development in ways that bring out challenges that are not just economic? He said that there are spiritual challenges, as well. He spoke about the problems that emerge when humans understand nature as existing only to serve humans. He said that lifestyles cannot be justified unless humans first commit themselves to environmental stewardship. Evidence of the current emergency forces us to develop new imaginations, new commitments, new initiatives, accountability and local solutions. Putting politics back into the service of the community also means putting citizens into the center of decision making with the common good as the main focus. Faced with this globalized crisis, he said that we must remind the world of eternity as the central foundation for the unconditional

acceptance of justice as a basis for peace and the condition for new life. Gratitude plants the seeds of new hope. Solidarity is identical to harmony. He spoke of a spiritual conversion for in-depth transformation that reverses self-interest toward a new understanding that incorporates human and environmental values. The collective action of believers will apply pressure on world leaders. Through prayer and commitment, we can be led to new life that opens up possibilities for a just and sustainable society.

**Heiner Bielefeldt** (UN Special Rapporteur for Freedom of Religion or Belief, Switzerland), in absentia, sent a greeting by video where he affirmed the public engagement of religion. Religion remains a force for creating solidarity and positive commitment in many people across various faiths, denominations, and belief systems. He talked about the rediscovery of religion as a source of development, cross boundary communication, peacebuilding and other important elements of public and international diplomacy. At the same time, his mandate within the United Nations is freedom of religion of belief as a human right (initially, further to resolution 1986/20 a “Special Rapporteur on religious intolerance”, then changed in 2000 to be “Special Rapporteur on freedom of religion or belief” which was subsequently endorsed by ECOSOC decision 2000/261 and welcomed by General Assembly resolution 55/97; on 12 April 2013, the Human Rights Council adopted resolution 22/20, which, inter alia, extended the mandate of the Special Rapporteur for a further period of three years). With all the acknowledgement of this discovery of the re-emergence of religion as an aspect of public life, he would also add an element of caution, starting from religion as a human right, to respect everyone’s freedom of religion or belief, whether they belong to a small group, a big community, a new or traditional one, or someone who crosses boundaries between various religions. The logic of human rights differs from the logic of peace, although they are not necessarily exclusive. He asked attendees to remember the weak and vulnerable people in the world. Freedom of religion reminds us to not just focus on influential and powerful groups. Religious freedom, as part of human rights, is a peace project based on respect for everyone’s community. Real diversity means there will always be tensions and complications—a noisy peace of real human beings. Sometimes, it will even be a messy peace. Respect for human beings means to expect that they will discover issues that they have to sort out and discuss. In the end, peace involves development of projects that can be sustainable because people feel respected for who they are and how they see themselves.

**David N. Saperstein** (United States Ambassador-at-Large for International Religious Freedom, USA) spoke about how we live in a moment filled with hope and sadness across the globe as we see governments, societies, and non-state actors in the name of religion too often intensify their practices of hate on the streets of our cities in countries near and far, resorting to violence as a way of achieving domination over others. One of the most effective antidotes, he said, is the power and effectiveness of interfaith communities in the world working together. When we act together effectively it can geometrically increase what can be done alone. We learn not only from others with whom we are in cooperative dialogue with, but we also learn from others when we must explain clearly to other traditions our long held assumptions. The very act of meeting, sharing, dialoguing and working together models the kind of world of which we dream and strive to create. He spoke about protecting religious freedom because religious words can affect things and provided examples where religious words positively shaped social outcomes. He spoke about the Sustainable Development Goals and the important challenge of coming together to protect the environment. Barring dramatic action, we are approaching tipping points that will make sustainable development virtually impossible knowing full-well that the poorest countries who have contributed the least to the problems will bear the brunt of the worst effects. He asked us not to betray the trust future generations have placed in our hands. He spoke about the value of religious contributions to sustainable development through the provision of social services (health care, rehab programs, etc.) and cautioned against imposing crippling regulatory schemes or banning religious engagement in humanitarian work. Religious groups are not beyond corruption but ignoring them is to overlook an immense resource. Even when they are often ill equipped to function cooperatively with international agencies, they are often the ones still there when no one else is. The connection between sustainable development and economics is becoming increasingly visible as is the correlation between religious freedom and economic growth. There is less corruption and less religious violence where there is religious freedom. Every attack undermines religious communities' contributions to sustainable development. He spoke about how the future of sustainable development and religious freedom are intertwined. He spoke about being confronted with the fierce urgency of now, and how life leaves us naked with lost opportunities. We are not the prisoners of a bitter and unremitting past. Rather, he said that we must be, and will be, the shapers of a more hopeful future.

**Tim Wilson** (Human Rights Commissioner of Australia, Australia) spoke about the complexities in Australia of supporting fundamental religious freedoms at a time of great stress where people use violence justified by religion to do heinous acts. It becomes important to also recognize the role of religion in charitable acts. He spoke about the importance of reasserting religious freedom as a human right. Second, he said that people need to recognize others' freedom if they want their own freedom to be respected. Third, he emphasized the importance of engaging in trust-based discussions focused on challenging issues. Where religion is challenged in one place, it is challenged everywhere. In an age of individuality and individual identity, people erroneously conclude that the solution to resolving threats to social cohesion is to suppress individuality. But social cohesion is preserved by liberty. Suppression only results in outbursts. The important tenet is to have conversation with respect for humanity and a tolerance for difference that is rooted in discussion and debate. He talked about the importance of respecting the law and not seeking to direct how people live their lives as the path for preserving social cohesion. Freedom allows for competing sources of authority to emerge, so developing authoritative influence becomes increasingly important. He said that the main challenge for authorities is to be relevant and not withhold cultural changes that have gained cultural acceptance. Religious freedom can promote economic development to make society just by protecting fairness and preserving the values that are central to a society. Some of the challenges in Australia arise from identity issues around gender and sexual orientation. They have created an international dialogue table as a way of bringing people together for dialogue in respectful discussion. He concluded saying that advance is only possible where everyone's rights are respected.

#### **LUNCHEON COMMENTS FROM PARLIAMENTARY PANEL**

**Aykan Erdemir** (Former Member of Parliament, Turkey) introduced the panel of parliamentarians and called for sincerity of engagement. He encouraged mutual and complete accountability as a way to affirm the dignity and fundamental rights and freedoms of people.

**Carmen Asiaín Pereira** (Senator, Member of Parliament; President, Latin American Consortium for Freedom of Religion or Belief, Uruguay) spoke about her experience of defending religious freedom and serving in parliament in Uruguay. She challenged the aura of mistrust that tends to surround politicians and spoke about political engagement as one of the

highest forms of charity because it allows a person to contribute to the well-being of the common good.

**Katrina Lantos Swett** (Commissioner, United States Commission for International Freedom, USA) spoke about parliamentarians who are working to fight for fundamental human rights.

**Knox Thames** (Special Advisor for Religious Minorities in the Near East and South/Central Asia, U.S. Department of State, USA) talked about the challenging task associated with bringing parliamentarians together who are engaged in both religion and politics. At its core, democracy dignifies people by giving them the freedom to choose who will govern them. He talked about how religious freedom gives individuals the freedom to believe what they will. Religion influences lives and gives meaning to daily interactions. He talked about efforts to build a network of parliamentarians from around the world who understand the importance of protecting human rights and religious freedoms. He talked about two major meetings that were held, a 2014 meeting in Oslo and a 2015 meeting in New York. Several action letters to prime ministers came out of the meetings. They are continuing to find ways to create international connections for parliamentarians around religious freedom.

**Vecdet Öz** (Founding General Chairman of the Justice Party; Board Member, Istanbul University Institute of Forensic Medicine, Turkey) spoke about how groups are fighting for religious freedom in several countries. He said that meetings such as this are very important for defending freedom of religion. He said that the political exploitation of religion needs to end. He also said that politics should be removed from religion and that religion and state should be separate. If you live in a democratic society, practicing one's religion should be based on an individual's freedom of conscience as the backbone of a democracy. He then discussed some of the activities of his political party.

**Fatih Gürsul** (Faculty, Istanbul University; Advisor to the Republican People Party Leader, Turkey) spoke about the importance of preserving secularism. He talked about his political involvement in protecting the religious freedom of individuals. He said that secularism is the antidote to terrorism.

## **LUNCHEON COMMENTS**

**Alparslan Acikgenc** (Philosophy Professor at Yıldız Technical University, Turkey) spoke about the relationship between science and religion. Although they are frequently thought to be mutually exclusive, he presented an alternative way of bringing science and religion together from a Muslim philosophic point of view.

## **CONCLUDING DINNER SPEAKERS**

**W. Cole Durham** (President, International Consortium for Law and Religion Studies, Italy) thanked the many people who made the meetings possible, then he told a short story about a traveling Rabbi who was asked to explain how he discerns when the morning has come. One of the people responded by saying, “When there is enough light to tell the sheep from the goats, you will know the morning has come.” When the Rabbi was asked, he responded by saying, “If you can look in the distance and see that someone is your brother or your sister, then you will know that the morning has come.” One of the things about an opportunity like this is that it provides people from many cultures an opportunity to come together, to obtain new ideas to move forward with and internalize and find ways to implement. In small ways, it is a sign, brothers and sisters, that the morning has come.

**Recep Şentürk** (Director, Alliance of Civilizations Institute, Turkey) spoke about open civilizations as a manifestation of the divine in different forms. If the goal of these meetings was to convey the message that a mere economic perspective is not enough to solve the pressing problems of the day, then he said that this goal has been achieved. He said that we are in a new era where civilizations are interconnected more closely than ever before in human history. It has been said we are living in a single village, but the people in the village are fighting with one another. So, we need a global framework that is based on humanness. He spoke about the contribution these meetings made toward this end. He thanked everyone involved in organizing the meetings, including the Alliance of Civilizations Institute and the many volunteers who helped make the event run smoothly. Gifts were presented and the meetings were brought to a close.

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