THIRD GLOBAL FORUM OF THE ALLIANCE OF CIVILIZATIONS, in Rio de Janeiro

BRIDGING CULTURES, BUILDING PEACE

Thematic Session #12, ‘The Role of Religious Leaders in Promoting Peace and Human Development’, 29 May 2010, 09.00 - 10:15

Background

This session will bring together key religious leaders from various confessions to explore how the constructive role of religious communities in peace building, human development and promoting social cohesion can be strengthened and built upon.

The roundtable will present four case studies that will highlight how religious communities and their leaders have actively contributed to address issues of violent conflict, social cohesion and human development. Enlightened by the case studies the debate will challenge some of the misconceptions about the role of religion in public life, in particular, the widespread belief that religion is a source of conflict and violence. While recognizing that extremist ideologies tend to use religion to spread a message of hatred, the case studies will show that religious values themselves are not at the root of tensions across diverse communities. The examples will illustrate what religious leaders can do to ensure that their faith is not being exploited, but is being mobilized to constructively addressing challenges of conflict, social fragmentation and lack of human development.

Panelists will be key actors in the cases that will be described and analyzed. They have, in their respective ways, gained considerable experience in addressing conflict and promoting social justice. In the run-up to the Forum, a statement will be developed by panelists and other religious representatives in collaboration with Religions for Peace, outlining joint commitments in a number of key areas, including, for instance, supporting mediation processes to solve conflicts, the fight against poverty and social disintegration.

Questions for discussion

Questions will be raised about how values of solidarity and empathy shared by a diversity of faiths may be translated into reality and inspire constructive actions on the ground. How can the case studies serve as inspiration for other religious communities and leaders that are faced with similar challenges?

Organizing partner

Religions for Peace