



Federal Foreign Office

Responsibility of Religions and Governments for Peace – Between Autonomy and Complementarity

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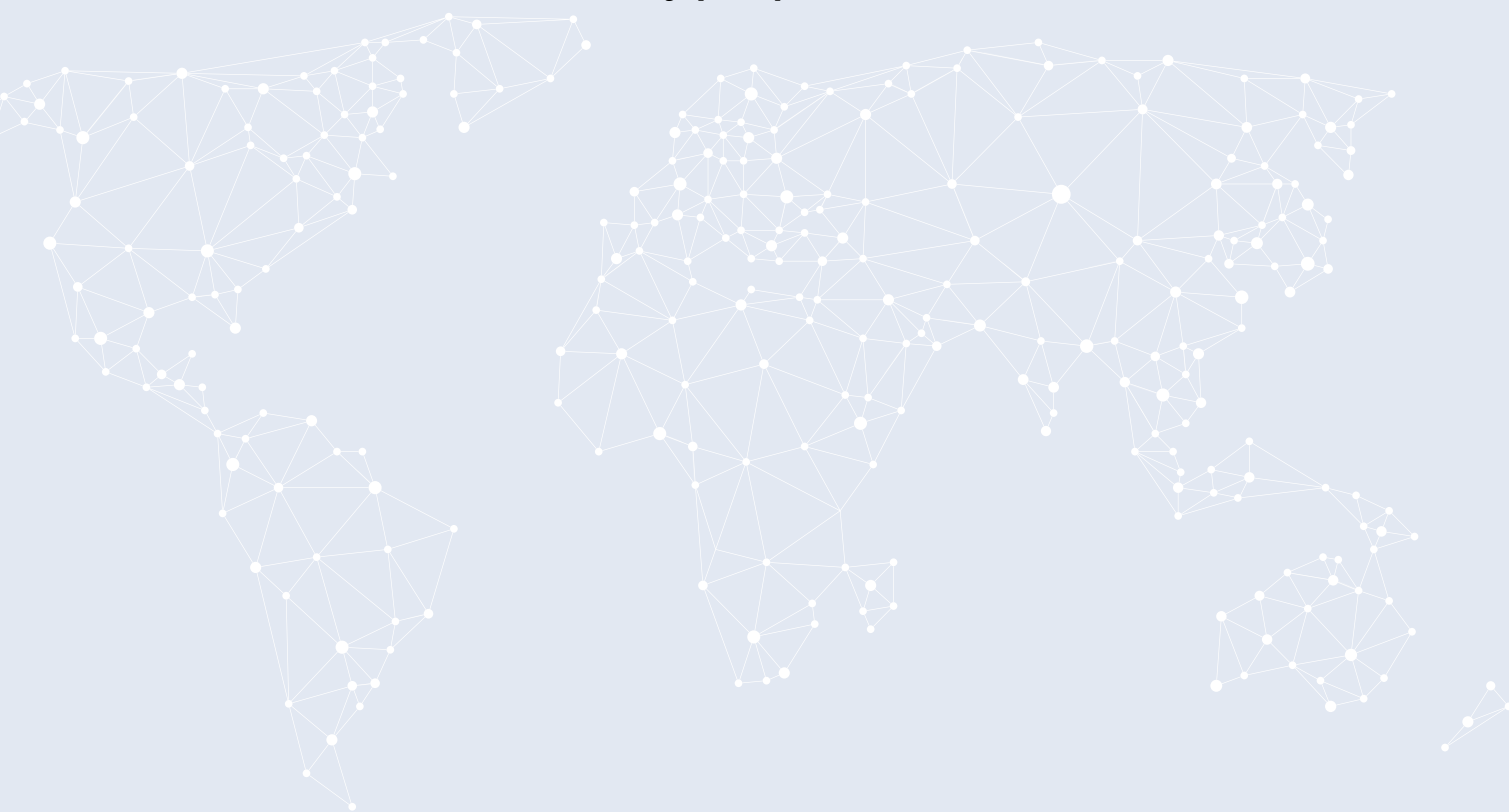


FRIEDENSVERANTWORTUNG DER RELIGIONEN
RESPONSIBILITY OF RELIGIONS FOR PEACE
RESPONSABILITÉ DES RELIGIONS À L'ÉGARD DE LA PAIX

مسؤولية الأديان من أجل السلام

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Agenda

Opening Statements

- HE David Gill, German Consul General
- Written Message of
HE António Guterres, UN Secretary-General
- HE Nassir Abdulaziz Al-Nasser, High Representative of the UN Alliance of Civilizations (UNAOC)
- Gillian Kitley, Head of the UN Office on Genocide Prevention and the Responsibility to Protect (UNOGP)
- Dr William F. Vendley, Secretary General of Religions for Peace International

First Panel:

Towards complementarity between religions, governments and the multilateral dimension

- Prof. Andrea Bartoli,
Representative of the Community of Sant'Egidio
- Dr Mohamed Elsanousi,
Director of the Secretariat of the Network for Religious and Traditional Peacemakers, Washington DC Office
- Rev. Robert Goyek,
President of the Church of the Lutheran Brethren of Cameroon
- Gillian Kitley, Head of the UNOGP
- Heidrun Tempel, Deputy Director-General for Research and Academic Relations Policy and Cultural Relations Policy, German Federal Foreign Office

Second Panel:

The peace process in Colombia

- Padre Dario Echeverri, Secretary General of the National Reconciliation Commission of Colombia
- Tom Koenigs, Envoy of the German Federal Foreign Minister to the Colombian Peace Process
- Rev. Pablo Moreno, Director of the Commission for Restoration, Life and Peace of the Evangelical Council of Colombia
- HE María Emma Mejía Vélez, Permanent Representative of Colombia to the UN

Interviews:

Young leadership and interfaith understanding

- Fatima Al Banawi, Social Researcher and Artist (UNAOC Fellowship Program 2017)
- Dr Taras Dzyubanskyy, Theologian, Lecturer at the Ukrainian Catholic University (UNAOC Fellowship Program 2017)

Closing remarks

- Dr Azza Karam
- Heidrun Tempel

Moderated by Dr Azza Karam, Senior Advisor to the UN Population Fund, and Coordinator of the UN Inter-Agency Task Force on Religion and Development.

Co-sponsored by the UN Alliance of Civilizations, the UN Office on Genocide Prevention and the Responsibility to Protect, and Religions for Peace International.

Organised by Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH.

2. Opening Statement by HE David Gill, Consul General of Germany in New York

Your Eminences, Excellencies, Honoured Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen!

There are several reasons why talking about the role of religions and religious communities is of importance today.

Firstly, we are experiencing times of increasing crises, as well as an unstable world order, where religions as such are often accused of being responsible for violence and terror as they are abused by extremists. We have to address this phenomenon and discuss how religious communities can protect religion from being hijacked by small minorities for inhuman goals. We should discuss how religions can unfold their peaceful dimension in order to build a better world.

Secondly, foreign policy is not only made for diplomats and governments. Civil society needs to have a say. Without civil society, a sustainable and long term societal peace is unimaginable. Thus, we see religious communities as our partner to whom we would like to listen, from whom we would like to learn and with whom we would like to cooperate when it comes to crisis prevention and sustainable peace-building.

The co-sponsorship of Religions for Peace today and the presence of so many representatives of faith-based organisations and of religious communities in this room highlight the interest in this matter, but also a widespread commitment.

What religions have in common is the sense of forgiveness which is indispensable for any reconciliation process. This is

another reason why the Federal Foreign Ministry established a new Task Force under the title “Responsibility of Religions for Peace”. In order to learn from each other, the Federal Foreign Office initiated gatherings of religious leaders from Europe, North and West Africa and the Middle East. In May, leaders of 53 countries came to Berlin to discuss issues like mediation, working with the media

and peace education. We established new networks that we can all benefit from. As a starting point we began – for reasons of capacity – with a focus on Abrahamic religions but also invited representatives of smaller religions. For the next year, due to high

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interest, we are planning another meeting in Berlin with religious leaders of Asian religions.

The relationship between governments or states and religion is not always an easy one. Still, I am convinced that we have a chance and a duty to strengthen the considerable positive potential of religions and religious communities within nation-states, as well as among states as members of a globalized world. Multilateral organizations like the UN, the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe, and many others have already initiated various processes to deal with the challenges and opportunities of this relation. Religious communities and denominations themselves have taken on this task. In many instances, they already take responsibility for peace processes and reconciliation within societies. The establishment of inter-religious alliances nationally and internationally has increased over the last years. That is highly appreciated.

From the very many issues that could have been dealt with when one reflects about the relationship between peace and religion, we have chosen a specific one today – the cooperation of governments (the state side) and religious actors in peace processes. Our title

Religions teach us a profound understanding of guilt, forgiveness and reconciliation. Religious leaders can experience failure and futility and still stand up for fairness and justice in their societies, where others see only friends and foes.

“Between Autonomy and Complementarity” already hints at one of the main questions. In which areas can and should the state and the religious level act alone, and where should they interact more closely to foster peace?

We all agree that governments bear the primary responsibility for peace and stability. However, religions can and should assume their responsibility, too. This year, we celebrated 500 years of Reformation. Luther did not perceive himself solely as a believer and monk, but also as a political person. His message was: get involved and take your responsibility. Religions teach us a profound

understanding of guilt, forgiveness and reconciliation. Religious leaders can experience failure and futility and still stand up for fairness and justice in their societies, where others see only friends and foes. And most importantly, they take a long-term view – something that is needed to foster peace. In the future, I would like to hear the words peace and religion in the same sentence more often.

Ladies and gentlemen, again, welcome to all of you! We will now hear the message of the UN Secretary-General. Thank you for your attention!

3. Written Message by HE António Guterres, United Nations Secretary-General

I thank the German Federal Foreign Office for hosting this timely discussion on the role of religious actors in supporting peace and building bridges between people.

The values of compassion, mutual respect and forgiveness found in all religions are essential elements in preventing armed conflict and addressing the spread of violent extremism. At this time of rising intolerance, divisiveness and scapegoating, religious leaders are the teachers and counselors whose example can uphold these values and send a powerful message of global unity.

In today's world, societies are becoming multicultural, multiethnic and multi-religious. This diversity must be seen as a richness, not as a threat. But to make diversity a success, we need to invest in social cohesion, so that all people feel that their identities are respected and that they have a stake in the community as a whole.

The United Nations is strongly committed to deepening this work, including through our "Together" campaign and the Alliance of Civilizations. Thank you for your support in that effort. Please accept my best wishes for a fruitful conference.

4. Opening Statement by HE Nassir Abdulaziz Al-Nasser, High Representative for the United Nations Alliance of Civilizations

Today we gather to discuss the role of religion in the pursuit of peace. Surely, there is no greater purpose behind our various faiths than this effort: that all men (and women!) should live together as brothers and sisters, free from the scourge of war.

I wish to congratulate the Federal Foreign Office of Germany for undertaking this critical task. It is noteworthy when governments recognize the complementary role that actors without official portfolios can play. We will hear from a panel that will describe the concept of complementarity as well as one that will provide historical perspective through discussing the peace process in Colombia.

I am particularly pleased that alumni of our own UN Alliance of Civilizations Fellowship Program will be here to talk about the importance of youth leadership in building



interfaith understanding in their own communities. This program, supported generously by the Federal Foreign Office of Germany, features an intercultural exchange of young professionals from Europe and North America on one side with young professionals from North Africa and the Middle East on the other. We can learn much from intercultural exchanges and that includes complementary approaches to interfaith dialogue led by civil society.

When we speak of complementarity in peace processes, we should understand that dialogue is not the same as mediation or negotiation. Dialogue is usually a part of those processes but dialogue is defined as the exchange of ideas. The word comes from the ancient Greek word describing a conversation between two or more people. The act of conversation is essential to understanding. It is through that conversation that we learn about the other, learn to understand the other and learn to respect the other.

In many communities, religious leaders are the first adults our children get to know outside our own families. They are the teachers and the counselors in many communities.

Religious leaders play a special role in our communities and can play a special role in building dialogue between groups, between neighborhoods, between neighbors. In many communities, religious leaders are the first adults our children get to know outside our own families. They are the teachers and the counselors in many communities.

It is through these critical roles that they provide the moral guidance that can translate into greater respect for one another, greater respect for the concept of coexistence, and a lasting commitment to peace.

I wish you all success in today's discussions.

5. Opening Statement by Gillian Kitley, Head of the United Nations Office on Genocide Prevention and the Responsibility to Protect

The topic of today's meeting touches the very core of the mandate of my office, the UN Office on Genocide Prevention and the Responsibility to Protect, and aligns with the priorities of its Special Advisers on Genocide Prevention and on the Responsibility to Protect.

These two Special Advisers advocate for national and international efforts to protect populations from atrocity crimes – by which we mean genocide, war crimes and crimes against humanity – and from their incitement, and they work in cooperation with our UN colleagues, Member States, regional organisations and civil society to advance this objective.

History has taught us that no region is immune from atrocity crimes. Atrocities have been committed in all regions of the world and continue to be perpetrated during both times of peace and times of conflict. This violence does not come out of the blue; it is usually the result of a process that develops over time and that includes a deeply rooted and systematic marginalisation of and discrimination against

Violence is usually the result of a process that develops over time and that includes a deeply rooted and systematic marginalisation of and discrimination against certain population groups based often on their religious identity.

certain population groups based on their identity – often their religious and/or ethnic identity. As we understand the causes and precursors of atrocity crimes, there is no excuse for us not to take action to prevent these crimes from occurring. Yet we are still failing to do so.

At the UN's 2005 World Summit, all states committed to protect their populations from genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity, and from the incitement of these crimes, and they committed to cooperate in fulfilling their collective responsibility to protect. One of the duties of the Special Adviser role is to remind states of this responsibility and work in cooperation with them to fulfil it.

But while states are primarily responsible for protecting populations, other societal actors also have a fundamental role to play, among them religious leaders. We are focusing on religious leaders because they have both the opportunity and a responsibility to play this role, given their moral and spiritual leadership





and the influence they have over so many different and important communities – including in situations where religion has been misused to justify violence and persecution.

Our conviction that religious leaders and actors can make an important contribution to the protection of populations was a key factor in our office’s decision to engage with these figures. Over a two-year period, consultations were held across all regions to explore ways in which religious leaders and actors could contribute to the prevention of incitement to violence that could lead to atrocity crimes.

The output resulting from this process is this Plan of Action for Religious Leaders and Actors to Prevent Incitement to Violence that Could Lead to Atrocity Crimes. The Plan of Action was developed by religious leaders for religious leaders and recommends courses of action that religious leaders and actors can take to address a range of different issues.

The Plan of Action considers the prevention of incitement to violence to be a comprehensive endeavour and one that benefits from contributions from diverse societal actors, including religious leaders and actors, the state and state institutions, secular and religious civil society, new and traditional media, and multilateral organisations.

When the United Nations Secretary-General, António Guterres, launched the Plan of Action in July 2017, he called for it to be disseminated and implemented as widely as possible. My office, in collaboration with the King Abdullah bin Abdulaziz International Centre for Interreligious and Intercultural Dialogue Centre, the Network of Religious and Traditional Peacemakers and the World Council of Churches, will host a meeting to discuss its implementation on 13 and 14 February 2018 in Geneva.

The German government installed a Task Force on the Responsibility of Governments and Religions for Peace. The Task Force had its public kick-off in May 2017, and I would like to commend this initiative for three main reasons:

Firstly, during the consultations that we organised with religious leaders, they stressed the importance of having political backing for their work. We believe that collaboration between states and religious leaders and actors – representing not just the majority religion but all religions – is of interest to both sides and can contribute not only to the prevention of identity-based violence but also to other important agendas linked to the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals.

Secondly, we believe that this initiative can contribute to the implementation of the above-mentioned Plan of Action.

Thirdly, we think that this initiative is in line with other UN agendas, including: the implementation of the Responsibility to Protect principle; the promotion and protection of human rights, including the rights to freedom of religion or belief, freedom of peaceful assembly and freedom of association; the implementation of the Secretary-General’s Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism; and the fulfilment of the Sustainable Development Goals and, in particular, of Goal 16 on the promotion of just, peaceful and inclusive societies.

Our office looks forward to working with Germany on the development of this initiative and its implementation. And I look forward to a productive discussion with you this afternoon.

Thank you.

6. Opening Statement by Dr William F. Vendley, Secretary General of Religions for Peace International

We are gathered to focus on the responsibility of religions and governments for peace. In agreement with our important sub-title “between autonomy and complementarity”, I am convinced that honoring the differing identities, mandates and capacities of governments and religions can provide a key to advancing their fruitful collaboration in building Peace.

My conviction is based on experience. I would like share with you a still dynamically unfolding example that I will call somewhat awkwardly “Marrakesh November 2011, Marrakesh January 2016 and Beyond”.

Marrakesh November 2011: In November 2011, Religions for Peace convened senior religious leaders from across the MENA region – Muslims, Christians and Jews – to help build Peace across that region based on their widely shared religious values. It was a moving gathering during a turbulent storm. The region – indeed the world – was reeling from 9/11, the invasion of Iraq, shocking experiences of violent terrorism, and ugly expressions of Islamophobia and stigmatization. In that painful context, the religious leaders in Marrakesh issued a call for their communities to develop “contracts of mutual care”. Each religious community was to identify and share its own religious grounds for respecting and protecting the well-being of others.

Importantly, these religious leaders produced powerful religious warrants for robust notions of citizenship, religious warrants to protect minorities and – very interestingly for our purposes – religious reflections on the importance of Human Rights Resolution 16/18, which had just been unanimously adopted 6 months earlier. Notice here, the conjunction of the political and the religious – the religious leaders gathered in Marrakesh offered religious reflections in support of the importance of a diplomatic resolution, HR Res. 16/18.

A capsule review of the history provides needed background: from 1999 until 2010 significant political differences arose in the UN regarding concern over the “defamation of religion” on the one hand and “freedom of expression” on the other. The Islamic bloc – led by the Organization of Islamic Cooperation – supported the defamation of religion resolutions, while the West opposed these resolutions. The Islamic bloc was incensed at the ways freedom of speech was being used with legal impunity to insult and defame Islam, while those in the West were concerned that the anti-defamation sentiments advanced by the OIC could be used to oppress freedom of speech and legitimate protest and dissent.

This deadlock was overcome in April 2011 when the OIC introduced and the Human Rights Council in Geneva adopted by consensus Human Rights Resolution 16/18. This resolution was designed to combat intolerance, negative stereotyping, stigmatization, discrimination, incitement to violence and violence against persons based on religion or belief.

Human Rights Resolution 16/18 was a kind of political “breakthrough”. It was achieved by the political intelligence and skill of all states involved during those fraught days.

Now back to religious leaders gathered in Marrakesh in 2011. Religions for Peace had invited the then ambassador of the OIC to the UN to give an insider’s report to the religious leaders on the resolution that their own states had adopted by consensus. It was as if the laborious decade-long political process opened a door for the religious leaders to walk through. Once opened by the diplomats, the religious scholars had no difficulty at all in carting through the opened door the foundational and deeply liberating riches of their respective traditions on human dignity and the common good essential for the peaceful renewal of the region.

But the plot thickens. Fast forward with me to Marrakesh in January 2016. If diplomats through the Human Rights Resolution 16/18 – so to speak – opened a door for religious leaders to walk through, the great scholar Shaykh Abdullah bin Bayyah, together with other eminent Islamic scholars – with the patronage of the King of Morocco and the Emir of the United Arab Emirates – returned the favor by opening a religious door for diplomats to walk through.



In briefest terms, the great Shaykh focused on the Prophet Mohammed’s historic Medina Charter, in which Prophet Mohammed – requested by Jewish tribes to help mediate a tribal conflict – established an early form of a political “constitution” that united Jewish tribes with his own believers in a single political covenant, a single *ummah*. In short, with equal measure of historical erudition and faithful creativity, Shaykh bin Bayyah and his distinguished Islamic scholar colleagues issued a Marrakesh Declaration that marked out the historically rooted obligations of all Muslim majority states to offer full citizenship – including all religious freedoms – to non-Muslim minority members.

Thus, the Marrakesh example – spanning from 2011 through 2016 and still unfolding – marks out a “virtuous cycle”. If the skilled and patient diplomats behind the Human Rights Resolution 16/18 opened a door for religious leaders in MENA to port their traditions’ treasures into our own day, so Shaykh bin Bayyah and his Islamic scholars returned the favor by using authentic Islamic heritage to open a door for MENA states and their diplomats to afford robust notions of citizenship to non-Muslim minorities in Muslim majority states.

Attend to the beauty of this reciprocal complementarity: Each sector – the diplomatic and the religious – made its own distinctive contribution that supported and even – so to speak – liberated the other sector to fulfill its own mandate.

Let me conclude by drawing the obvious lesson from my still unfolding example: religions and states have distinct identities, mandates, and capacities. Religions root their identities in their experience of God, understand their mandates as commissioned by God and recognize that their religious capacities flow from their respective alignment with and participation in the Love of God.

Governments on the other hand – including governments that acknowledge a relationship to a particular faith – highlight that their identities are rooted fundamentally in the peoples they are mandated to serve.

Differentiating the identities, mandates and capacities of both religions and states is, I would submit, the key to facilitating their partnership for building peace. Such partnerships can be firmly aligned around advancing human dignity and building up the common good, without asking religious leaders to function as governments or governmental leaders to function as religious scholars. Each have their gifts to give. May the cooperation go forth!

7. Conference Panels

First Panel: Towards complementarity between religions, governments and the multilateral dimension

At the heart of the panel discussion on complementarity between religions, governments and the multilateral dimension were questions on the particular role played by multilateral actors and on whether there is a typical division of work in the interactions between religious communities and governments. The panellists addressed the relationship between religion and the state in general, but also discussed specific topics concerning local partnerships and cooperation and how international structures can be applied in a supportive and constructive way.

It was generally agreed that clarifying roles and responsibilities is a prerequisite for the involvement of very different actors and that the major requirement for peacebuilding is tangible investment in trust building. In these two areas, religious communities and their leaders most certainly have a role to play. Reverend Robert Goyek, President of the Church of the Lutheran Brethren of Cameroon, reported on the important role played by religious communities in the work to resolve the conflict in the Central African Republic and highlighted the significance of women's increasing participation in this process. Prof. Andrea Bartoli, representative of the Community of Sant'Egidio, shared his Community's experiences

of the involvement and integration of religious leaders in peace processes and highlighted his concerns regarding government efforts to control religions: the more freedom religious communities enjoy, the more stability states demonstrate. Furthermore, Bartoli emphasised that victims of conflicts should be given the opportunity to decline from participating in reconciliation initiatives for reasons of self-protection. Mohamed Elsanousi, Director of the Network for Religious and Traditional Peacemakers, decried the increasing lack of fundamental religious freedom worldwide and pointed to the still outstanding changes (e.g. civil rights for religious minorities) required in predominantly Muslim countries in response to the Marrakesh Declaration.

Heidrun Tempel, Deputy Director-General for Research and Academic Relations Policy and Cultural Relations Policy at the German Federal Foreign Office, provided a comprehensive account of the first conference on the Responsibility of Religions for Peace, held in May 2017 at the German Federal Foreign Office in Berlin, which saw the participation of more than a hundred representatives of Christian, Jewish and Muslim groups. In addition, she outlined plans for follow-up meetings with, in particular, religious





leaders and representatives from Asia in order to complement the approaches being developed within the Abrahamic context. Tempel highlighted the necessity of having a forum for critical discourse on disagreements and discrepancies, noting that, in principle, there are no simple solutions in the course of peace negotiations.

During the discussion with the audience, further reflections on direct cooperation with religions were shared, covering issues such as: how to respond to the shrinking of civil society space; religious leaders' need and demand for capacity building in the areas of peacebuilding, meditation and conflict resolution; and the basic conditions for establishing trustful relations that underpin efficient cooperation, which are mutual respect and the spirit of a shared responsibility for peace despite the parties' different roles and self-conceptions.

Reflections shared by the audience

- Religion is part of the cultural fabric of society, and society is by nature multidimensional, multicultural and multifaceted. Therefore, acting on their own, neither religions nor governments can solve the problem. Religious actors in all their diversity have a crucial role to play.
- Religious leaders are more deeply involved in human affairs and, as a result of this proximity to the people, they have the opportunity to listen to individuals and retell their stories.
- The mandate of a government is of a different nature to that of a religious practitioner. If the relationship between these two parties is to be fruitful, dialogue is therefore crucial.
- Shifting between complementarity and autonomy in a partnership: Religions and governments should not set out to make use of each other but should instead show respect and concern for each other's mandates. Religions should not be politicised.
- Morality and integrity are the preconditions for successful international, national and local interventions. Faith-based organisations and religious organisations can help to facilitate peace processes and can be a positive force in bringing the relevant parties to the table. However, to play this positive role, they need the support and acceptance of officials and the international community.
- Key questions: How compatible are the tenets and practices of religious groups and the UN's Sustainable Development Goals? What is the role of women within religions? How do religions deal with religious freedom as a basic value?

Second Panel: The peace process in Colombia

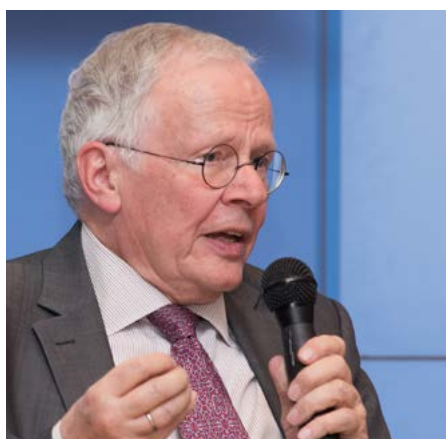
The speakers of the second panel underlined that the precondition and long-term approach for facilitating reconciliation and peace in Colombia was trust building. The discussion focused on experiences gained during the peace negotiations and on the role religious communities still play in the reconciliation process. Providing the conflict's victims with support and assistance is a key element for social reconditioning and conciliation, and Colombia's churches play a significant role in ensuring this provision. In the end, it is up to the victims to set the pace and terms of any reconciliation. The trust they place in the reliable religious leaders they turn to therefore plays a major role in Colombia's peacebuilding process.

María Emma Mejía Vélez, Permanent Representative of Colombia to the United Nations, emphasised that major challenges remain in the socio-political realm. To name but a few, past victims still need to be identified and encouraged to speak out in safe spaces, the parties to the conflict have not yet fully agreed on the next steps, and populism has become a force that could dismantle the whole process. Impartial leaders and committed facilitators are therefore indispensable in the near future, and the constructive management of disappointments and setbacks is of the utmost

importance. One positive change is that people's original mistrust regarding the role played by the international community has finally been replaced by an understanding of the need for external support.

The international community (e.g. the UN) can support such peace processes by installing reliable facilitators who are committed to working on the ground and building trust with local decision-makers and with the parties to the conflict. It is essential that these facilitators be impartial with regard to the specific interests of the different parties involved in the conflict.

Tom Koenigs, Envoy of the German Federal Foreign Minister to the Colombian Peace Process, made reference to Germany's particular interest in the success of the peace process in Colombia, citing his own country's history of two reconciliation processes – one after World War II and the other after the fall of the Berlin Wall. However, unlike Colombia's approach, Germany's reconciliation processes involved no meetings between victims and perpetrators. Favouring the approach of civil crisis prevention over military solutions, Koenigs underlined the significance of participation and democracy for preventing conflict and violence.





The Secretary General of the National Reconciliation Commission of Colombia, Padre Dario Echeverri, described his personal experience working as a mediator in the peace process. He raised his concerns about the inconsistent role of the Colombian church and called for efforts to develop a culture of conversation and cooperation, where differences and disagreements can be addressed. From his point of view, the entire process is very painful but there is no alternative. In Colombia, society's growing humanity and positive development is visible. Pablo Moreno, Director of the Commission for Restoration, Life and Peace of the Evangelical Council of Colombia, once more emphasised the importance of working with victims. He reported on the numerous projects that local Colombian parishes have set up for young people to offer them alternatives to poverty, violence and drug dealing.

Reflections shared by the audience

- Particular sensitivity is required with regard to the Colombian people's proverbial immunity from pain and lack of trust, and when addressing their experiences of loss and death during the 55 years of severe conflict in the country.
- In such situations, it is of the utmost importance to leave no one behind. This applies particularly to women, girls and young people in general, as they are the most vulnerable groups in conflict situations.
- The inclusive development imperative to 'leave no one behind', which is prominently enshrined in the 2030 Agenda, is particularly relevant to Colombia's situation.
- Lack of representation leads to discrimination and marginalisation and is therefore a major source of conflict.
- The considerable differences and the stark division between rural and urban people lie at the heart of the conflict in Colombia. For the situation to improve in future, the following questions need to be addressed: How should the mistrust between city and rural dwellers be addressed? How can the differences between these groups be reduced and the representation of rural people improved? How can the situation of young people in particular be transformed?
- The role of the churches and of faith is key for rebuilding trust among Colombian people. Increasing the democratic participation and representation of rural Colombian people is another important element for establishing trust and confidence.
- The Colombian peace process and its reconciliation efforts in particular still have a long road to travel and the journey will at times be very difficult. It is therefore essential to hold on to the hope and the belief that Colombia is capable of building a more participatory and democratic system in the future.



Interviews: Young leadership and interfaith understanding

The topic of the third panel was young people, leadership and interfaith understanding. Two representatives of the United Nations Alliance of Civilizations' (UNAOC) Fellowship Program were selected to share the stories of their personal commitment to peacebuilding in their respective societies. The UNAOC Fellowship Program is funded through grants from the German Federal Foreign Office.

Fatima Al Banawi from Saudi Arabia is a theologian, social researcher and artist who focuses on women, gender and Islamic studies. In the interview, Al Banawi described her project *The Other Story*, a platform for capturing and sharing personal narratives through the medium of storytelling. Launched in 2015, the platform's goal is to promote psychosocial development and the realisation of shared humanity. Al Banawi has already collected more than 2,000 stories, each anonymous and handwritten on a single side of A4 paper, from people across Saudi Arabia from diverse social classes, occupations and age groups. In her artwork, she explores the social dichotomies that emerge as a result of class, privilege and race. She encourages listening, asking and reflection and, in so doing, builds a bridge between the arts and work with social goals: 'We all assume to know certain things about the other and surrender to our assumptions, stop asking questions. We assume that we know, we stop asking questions. We create narratives. Without asking.'

By addressing topics that are not yet socially welcomed, Al Banawi describes the drastic changes occurring in her society. She considers dialogue to be a goal in itself, a dynamic part of cultural exchange rather than a process for reaching a destination. In this spirit, people can begin to face their reality, their imperfection and even the moments when they dare to question their religion.

Against this background, Al Banawi applies art as a medium of communication and representation with the aim of fostering inclusion and especially the inclusion of young people.

Taras Dzyubansky is a theologian from Ukraine and an advisor on religious issues to the Mayor of Lviv. In May 2013 he inaugurated *Libertas*, an interfaith centre and communication platform that is the first of its kind in Ukraine. *Libertas* has held over 30 ecumenical and interreligious events with the aim of promoting dialogue and understanding between different religious groups. During the interview, Dzyubansky described the role of religion during his country's territorial dispute with Russia. When the conflict spread, religious communities in Ukraine began working together more closely to build trust and gather funds for women and children who had lost their husbands and fathers. The Tatar Muslims forced to leave Crimea after the Russian annexation, who were keen to better integrate themselves into the Lviv community, received a warm response from the city's diverse Christian communities to their request to build a Muslim cemetery.

In response to the moderator's question on what extra insights religion may have afforded him, Dzyubansky – similar to his fellow interviewee Al Banawi – pointed to dialogue as a process that enables people to encounter and understand each other. He also reflected on the major challenge arising in relation to the interface between religion and governments and the situation where politics may seek to manipulate and instrumentalise religion. In his view, governments should instead help religious communities to improve their media presence and their public image.

8. Closing Remarks by the Moderator, Dr Azza Karam, and by Heidrun Tempel of the German Federal Foreign Office

In the closing session, Azza Karam highlighted the role of religion as it is presented in the different discourses on making, building and sustaining peace. For centuries, religious leaders and religious organisations have been important agents of change and have accompanied people from all walks of life. Trust underpins the relationships between the diverse actors operating in different contexts of peace work. In addition, for the cooperation between the different actors to be meaningful, a spirit of shared responsibility and willingness for change and for doing good is essential. As religion is often seen as set apart from culture, it is essential to communicate the fact that religion is part of the cultural fabric of society. As such, religion on its own cannot provide all the answers. The shift from conflict to peace can only happen through a manifold approach: multi-religious, multidimensional, multicultural and multinational. Governments as well as religious actors in all their diversity have a central role to play.

Governments as well as religious actors in all their diversity have a central role to play. Not only is there a complementarity of rights, but also a complementarity of responsibilities.

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Heidrun Tempel closed the event by bringing particular topics into focus: she considered the approach of shifting between autonomy and complementarity to be appropriate and urged politicians to particularly respect the autonomy of religion and the different mandates of government and religion. In her view, the politician's mindset is marked by a tendency to think in terms of budgetary plans and legislative terms whereas religious institutions and leaders often get closer to individuals, victims and young people and are therefore better able to share these people's stories. If each side is to derive mutual benefit from each other's traits and qualities, it is crucial that they engage in dialogue and recognise the incredible value of the conversation process. As shown in the case of Colombia, dialogue and the search



for understanding is a long path to tread. However, the example of collecting individual stories in Saudi Arabia indicates that, despite the shrinking of political spaces that is generally observed in today's world, spaces can also be opened up. Dialogue is crucial for finding common ground and, as the process unfolds, one should be prepared to step beyond traditional knowledge and dare to ask questions.

Regarding cooperation between religion and politics, it is essential to build useful partnerships that do not involve each side seeking to draw benefit from the other or the politicisation of religions as partners of politics. On the other hand, it is legitimate to raise expectations and ask how religions are compatible with the Sustainable Development Goals, what kinds of roles women play in religious institutions and how religious freedom is treated. It is clear that added value can be derived from engaging diverse religious leaders as partners in peace-making at both the governmental and intergovernmental levels. The rules of this engagement must be the same as those applied to other civil society actors: it must be based on agreed principles of respect for human rights and dignity, and parties' expectations regarding mutual roles and responsibilities must be clearly defined.

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Furthermore, it is important to determine the source of the conflict. The media often lend weight to the misperception that religion is a major source of conflict. During the plenary discussion it was repeatedly highlighted that it is worth digging deeper into this issue and paying particular attention to the lack of representation that leads to marginalisation and discrimination.

Against this backdrop, sensitive measures to train and empower religious actors should be considered as part of the preventative work conducted in the field of peace education and the work with the media. The UN, in particular the UN Alliance of Civilizations, can also play a major role by providing support beyond governmental boundaries and limitations, by convening conflicting parties at the national or regional level, and by nominating independent facilitators to support the peace efforts. Both religious leaders and faith-based organisations can play a major role in identifying and helping to solve conflicts.

The German Federal Foreign Office will continue to work with its new network of religious representatives and is planning to hold a meeting with religious representatives from Asia in 2018.



9. Biographies: Speakers and Panellists

HE Nassir Abdulaziz Al-Nasser

In March 2013, HE Nassir Abdulaziz Al-Nasser assumed the post of High Representative for the United Nations Alliance of Civilizations. Prior to this role, Al-Nasser was elected as President of the 66th Session of the United Nations General Assembly (2011–12). From 1998 to 2011, Al-Nasser served as Ambassador and Permanent Representative of the State of Qatar to the United Nations. As a veteran diplomat with a career spanning nearly four decades, he has contributed to advancing the multilateral agenda in the domains of peace and security, sustainable development and South–South cooperation.

Fatima Al Banawi

is a social researcher and artist who graduated in 2015 with a Master of Theological Studies from Harvard University. That same year she founded The Other Story project, a platform that collects people's personal stories and reproduces them in art form as a way to promote psychosocial development and reshape the public narrative about Saudi society. In 2016 Al Banawi received international recognition for her debut role in the award-winning Saudi feature film *Barakah Meets Barakah*, which was selected as Saudi Arabia's entry for best foreign language film at the 89th Academy Awards (Oscars).

Professor Andrea Bartoli

is the representative of the Community of Sant'Egidio to the United Nations and the United States. He works primarily on peace-making and genocide prevention and, as a member of the Community of Sant'Egidio, he has been involved in numerous conflict resolution processes. Prof. Bartoli is the Dean of the School of Diplomacy and International Relations at Seton Hall University. Previously, he held the position of Dean of the School of Conflict Analysis and Resolution at George Mason University. He was the Founding Director of the Center for International Conflict Resolution at Columbia University.

Dr Taras Dzyubansky

holds a BA in Philosophy and studied at various papal institutes in the Vatican. In 2012 he was awarded a PhD in Theology and Interreligious Dialogue. Dr Dzyubansky has deepened his involvement in interfaith dialogue by working in Kazakhstan and eastern Ukraine and, since October 2012, he has been working as an adviser to the Mayor of Lviv on religious and ecumenical issues. In May 2013 he inaugurated Libertas, an interfaith centre that is the first of its kind in Ukraine. At present, he teaches at the Ukrainian Catholic University in Lviv and coordinates an international group of alumni who are engaged in various interfaith initiatives.

Padre Dario Echeverri

is the Secretary General of the National Reconciliation Commission of Colombia. He has more than 30 years of experience in reconciliation and peacebuilding processes. As a Claretian priest, he works with the most vulnerable communities in the southern districts of the Colombian capital, Bogotá. He also took part in the mediation talks held in Havana, Cuba, that resulted in Colombia's 2016 peace accord. Internationally, Padre Echeverri has brought his long-standing experience to other peace processes, such as that of Burundi.

Dr Mohamed Elsanousi

is the Director of the Secretariat of the Network for Religious and Traditional Peacemakers, a global network set up by the United Nations Mediation Support Unit, UN Alliance of Civilizations, Organisation of Islamic Cooperation, Religions for Peace, KAICIID Dialogue Centre and Finn Church Aid. Dr Elsanousi served as the Director of Community Outreach and Interfaith Relations for the Islamic Society of North America (ISNA) and was the founding co-chair of the interfaith campaign Shoulder to Shoulder. He was also a member of the Religion and Foreign Policy Working Group, established by the US Department of State.

HE David Gill

has served as Germany's Consul General in New York since August 2017. Before going on to study law in, among other places, Philadelphia in the USA, Gill was the Spokesperson and Head of Division of the Federal Commissioner for the Files of the State Security Service (of the former GDR). After holding positions with the German Federal Ministry of the Interior and with the Office of the Commissioner for Data Protection and Freedom of Information in Berlin, he was for eight years the Deputy Representative of the Council of the Protestant Church in Germany (EKD) to the Federal Republic of Germany and the European Union. During Joachim Gauck's term as President of Germany (2012–17), he was State Secretary and Head of the Office of the Federal President.

Reverend Robert Goyek

is the President of the Council of Protestant Churches in Cameroon. Since 1977 he has served as a pastor in Cameroon, and in 1997 he became the President of the Lutheran Church of Cameroon. As President of the Programme of Christian-Muslim Relations in Africa (PROCMURA), Goyek contributes to interreligious dialogue in the region. At the international level, he has been a member of the Board of Trustees of the Lutheran World Federation in Geneva (Switzerland) as well as President of the Lutheran Communion of Central and West Africa (LUCCWA).

Dr Azza Karam

serves as a Senior Advisor on Culture and Social Development at the UN Populations Fund (UNFPA), a role that involves supporting fund-wide culture outreach. She represents the UNFPA as a coordinator and is chair of the UN Inter-Agency Task Force on Engaging Faith-Based Organizations for Development. Prior to taking up her post at the UNFPA, she served in various capacities in academic, non-governmental and faith-based organisations and in the international intergovernmental sector (e.g. the United Nations Development Programme). Dr Karam has published widely on international political dynamics, including democratisation, human rights, gender, and religion and development.

Gillian Kitley

heads the UN Office on Genocide Prevention and the Responsibility to Protect. The Office's Special Advisers work to advance national and international efforts to protect populations from genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity, and from the incitement of these crimes. She joined the Office in 2009 after working as a human rights officer in UN field operations in Africa, the Americas, Asia and the Middle East. Prior to joining the UN, Kitley worked for Amnesty International at its International Secretariat in London.

Tom Koenigs

has served since 2015 as the Special Envoy of the German Federal Foreign Minister to the Colombian Peace Process. He was a member of the German Parliament for the Green Party and Chairman of the Committee of the Bundestag on Human Rights and Humanitarian Aid. He worked as Deputy Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General in Afghanistan, Guatemala and Kosovo and as Federal Government Commissioner for Human Rights Policy and Humanitarian Aid at the German Federal Foreign Office.

Dirk Lölke

has headed the German Federal Foreign Office's Task Force Responsibility of Religions for Peace since 2016. Prior to this, at the German Federal Foreign Office he was Head of the Division on Emerging Countries and held other positions during secondments to Italy, Paraguay and Serbia. He has also held several other roles in Germany's Federal Foreign Office and Federal Chancellery, which mainly involved EU politics.

Reverend Pablo Moreno

is a Baptist pastor, theologian and historian. He is the Director of the Peace Commission of the Evangelical Council of Colombia and a member of the Municipal Peace Council in Cali, where he represents non-Catholic churches and other religious denominations. His work has involved accompanying the victims of the conflict in Colombia and leading the Training School for Peace at the Unibautista (Baptist university foundation). He was an influential force in the peace process between the Government of Colombia

and the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC). Moreno is a candidate for a doctorate in theology at the Free University of Amsterdam.

Heidrun Tempel

is the Deputy Director-General for Research and Academic Relations Policy and Cultural Relations Policy at the German Federal Foreign Office in Berlin. After serving as the German Federal Foreign Office's Ambassador for Dialogue among Civilisations, she held the positions of Deputy Head of Mission at the German Embassy in Indonesia (2010 – 2013) and Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of Germany to the Republic of Azerbaijan (2013 – 2016). Between 2000 and 2007, she was Head of the Department of Relation to Churches and Religious Associations, Jewish and Muslim Organisations of the German Federal Chancellery. From 1994 to 2000, she worked in Brussels as the Director of the EU Office of the Protestant Church in Germany (EKD). Tempel studied national economy, law and political science.

HE María Emma Mejía Vélez

has served since 2014 as the Permanent Representative of Colombia to the United Nations. She is a Colombian journalist and diplomat with extensive experience in the field of international affairs, holding high positions in the government for more than two decades. She has devoted a large part of her career to peace issues and relations between Latin American countries. Since 1999, she has been a member of the Foreign Affairs Advisory Committee of the Government of Colombia. Between 2003 and 2014 she served as Executive President and board member at the Fundación Pies Descalzos (Barefoot Foundation), created by the Colombian singer-songwriter Shakira. In 2011 Vélez was appointed Secretary General of the Union of South American Nations (UNASUR) by the heads of state of the Union.

Dr William F. Vendley

is the Secretary General of Religions for Peace International and a member of its World Council. He has advanced multi-religious efforts to prevent conflicts, mediate between warring parties and heal societies in the aftermath of violence in many countries, including Ethiopia, Eritrea, Indonesia, Iraq, Liberia and Sri Lanka. He serves on the Leadership Council of the UN Sustainable Development Solutions Network. His time serving on the Multi-Religious Cooperation and International Affairs Task Force of the White House Faith-Based Council saw him acting as an advisor to President Obama. He was also appointed by US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton and re-appointed by Secretary Kerry to serve as one of ten members of the Advisory Committee on the Secretary of State's Strategic Dialogue with Civil Society. He is a co-chair of the US State Department's Religion and Foreign Policy Working Group.

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