



e-Bulletin: Fourth Quarter 2009

GLOBAL ACTION | ADVANCING PEACE AROUND THE WORLD

The stories that follow are just a few examples of dedicated work undertaken by members of *Religions for Peace*, the world's largest and most representative multi-religious coalition, from 1 October through 31 December 2009. Additional outstanding efforts have been undertaken by our regional and national inter-religious councils and groups around the world.

COSTA RICA | "ARMS DOWN!" YOUTH CAMPAIGN LAUNCHED

United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon has warned that global military spending now tops \$1 trillion per year while funding for development remains low by comparison. To help address this dangerous disparity, the global multi-religious campaign on disarmament was launched by the *Religions for Peace* Global Youth Network in San José, Costa Rica, on 7-8 November 2009. More than a 120 young religious leaders of different faiths from forty-nine countries outlined their strategies for meeting the campaign's three goals: abolishing nuclear weapons, stopping the proliferation and misuse of conventional weapons, and redirecting at least 10 percent of military expenditure to achieve the UN Millennium Development Goals

IN THIS EDITION, READ ABOUT:

► *Religions for Peace* wins Interfaith Guru Nanak Award

► RESTORING DIGNITY campaign launched in Europe

► Religious leaders advocate at Copenhagen Climate Summit

► Prominent role at Parliament of World's Religions

Send us your news and work, and we'll include it in the next quarterly e-Bulletin!

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RELIGIONS FOR PEACE—the

(MDG's) by 2015. The campaign launch was organized by *Religions for Peace* Global Youth Network in partnership with the Arias Foundation for Peace and Human Progress and the University for Peace.

During the opening ceremony, President Oscar Arias Sánchez signed the campaign petition, which advances disarmament for shared security. At the campaign launch, **Dr. William F. Vendley**, the Secretary General of *Religions for Peace*, said, "Shared security is a new political paradigm. It echoes the holistic notions of peace that are found in the world's great religions." Playing a leadership role in the campaign with the youth are *Religions for Peace* Japan and **Rev. Koichi Matsumoto**, Chairman of its Youth Board. Supporting the youth were **Rev. Kyoichi Sugino**, Assistant Secretary General, **Ms. Katerina Ragoussi**, Associate Director of Youth and Network Coordination, and **Ms. Allison Pytlak**, Disarmament Coordinator.

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USA | RELIGIONS FOR PEACE WINS INTER-FAITH GURU NANAK AWARD

Religions for Peace was named the winner of the 2010 Guru Nanak Interfaith Prize on 19 November 2009 at New York's Hofstra University for its exceptional work in bringing together people from all faiths to build peace.

Co-recipient is Rabbi Arthur Schneier, the spiritual leader at Park East Synagogue in Manhattan and president of the Appeal for Conscience Foundation, which he founded in 1965. A witness to the Holocaust, Schneier has devoted his life to promoting religious tolerance and freedom. *Religions for Peace* and Rabbi Schneier will share the \$50,000 award. The two recipients were selected by an interfaith committee of ten members from among sixty individuals and organizations that were nominated this year from around the world.

The Guru Nanak Interfaith Prize is awarded biannually to enhance awareness of the critical role of religious dialogue in the pursuit of peace. The 14th Dalai Lama, Tenzin Gyatso, was the first recipient in 2008. Ishar Singh Bindra of Brookville, N.Y., and his

representative multi-religious coalition—advances common action among the world's religious communities for peace.

Religions for Peace works to transform violent conflict, advance human development, promote just and harmonious societies, and protect the earth.

The global *Religions for Peace* network comprises a World Council of senior religious leaders from all regions of the world; six regional inter-religious bodies and more than seventy national ones; and the Global Women of Faith Network and Global Youth Network.

family endowed the prize at the university in 2006.

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AUSTRALIA | LEADERSHIP ROLE AT PARLIAMENT OF WORLD'S RELIGIONS

Religions for Peace played a leadership role at the Fifth Parliament of the World's Religions, held 3-9 December 2009 in Melbourne, Australia. **Dr. William F. Vendley**, Secretary General of *Religions for Peace*, led several sessions including one on the role of religion in periods of mediation and in times of peacebuilding and reconciliation. Dr. Vendley said, "Religion and inter-religious cooperation often offer different perspectives, not only on the conflict itself but on the solutions and the processes toward it." Dr. Vendley also participated in a panel together with Dr. Tariq Ramadam and Rabbi Michael Melchior discussing "War and Peace in Al-Islam: The Prophet's Struggle." Among the sessions led by **Mr. Stein Villumstad**, Deputy Secretary General of *Religions for Peace*, was one on the proposed United Nations Decade of Interreligious and Intercultural Dialogue, Understanding, and Cooperation for Peace. **Ms. Jacqueline Ogega**, Director of the Women's Mobilization Program of *Religion for Peace*, led a session on women and peacebuilding. More than sixty members of *Religions for Peace* affiliates attended a special gathering for Parliament participants. Also among those representing *Religions for Peace* were, from the Latin America and the Caribbean Council of Religious Leaders, **Mr. Elias Szczytnicki**, Secretary General; from the European Council of Religious Leaders, **Ms. Ingrid Rosendorf Joys**, Head of Communications and Programme Manager, and **Ms. Naomi Sender**, Senior Executive Officer, and from the International Secretariat, **Rev. Donald (Bud) Heckman**, Director of External Relations. *Religions for Peace* had a booth in the exhibition hall, in which signatures for its advocacy campaigns were collected-the [ARMS DOWN](#): Campaign for Shared Security and [RESTORING DIGNITY](#): Ending Violence Against Women.

DENMARK | RELIGIOUS LEADERS JOIN IN

COPENHAGEN CLIMATE SUMMIT

Three *Religions for Peace* Co-Presidents-**H.E. Dr. Mustafa Ceric** of Bosnia- Herzegovina, **Ven. Dr. Grace Chung Lee** of Won Buddhism in Korea, and Church of Sweden **Archbishop Anders Wejryd** attended a multi-religious ceremony on 10 December 2009 in Copenhagen, Denmark, during the United Nations Climate Change Summit. The ceremony gathered international religious leaders in support of world political leaders' efforts to reach agreement on climate change measures. The Office of the Archbishop Wejryd and *Religions for Peace* Europe organized the event, which was coordinated by *Religions for Peace* Europe President **Rev. Dr. Hans Ucko**. They were supported by **Rev. Vebjørn Horsfjord**, Secretary General of the *Religions for Peace* European Council of Religious Leaders, and **Ms. Deepika Singh**, *Religions for Peace* Director of Program Coordination. The event furthered dialogue at an international conference of religious leaders on climate change in 2008 initiated by Archbishop Wejryd.

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UNITED KINGDOM | "RESTORING DIGNITY" LAUNCHED IN EUROPE

People of faith representing diverse faith traditions pledged to help stop violence against women as part of a global *Religions for Peace* initiative that mobilizes actions by religious leaders and communities. "RESTORING DIGNITY: Ending Violence Against Women" was launched in Europe by the *Religions for Peace* European Women of Faith Network held on 31 October to 1 November 2009 at the Nishkam Centre in Birmingham, United Kingdom. More than seventy people of faith gathered for the symposium.

Bhai Sahib Mohinder Singh, Chairman of *Guru Nanak Nishkam Sewak Jatha* Birmingham, member of the *Religions for Peace* European Council of Religious Leaders and a Co-President of the *Religions for Peace* World Council, called on all people of faith to reclaim religion as a source for good saying, "By working to restore the dignity of women and girls who have been violated, people of faith will restore the respect for faith because it has been

hijacked, misquoted, and misrepresented to perpetuate violence against women and girls."

Playing a leadership role at the event were **Ms. Yolande Illiano** and **Mrs. Ravinder Kaur Nijjar**, Co-Chairs of the *Religions for Peace* European Women of Faith, and **Ms. Mehrézia Labidi-Maiza**, Coordinator of the *Religions for Peace* International Women's Coordinating Committee. Supporting them was **Ms. Jacqueline Ogega**, Director of the *Religions for Peace* Women's Mobilization Program. The religious leaders also expressed support for the goals of the "Say NO - UNiTE to Violence Against Women Campaign" being advanced by the United Nations Secretary-General and United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM).

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GUINEA | RELIGIOUS LEADERS SPEAK OUT ON CONAKRY VIOLENCE

On 1 October 2009 the *Religions for Peace* African Council of Religious Leaders (*Religions for Peace* Africa) expressed their condolences and regrets for the loss of life during the civil unrest in the aftermath of the demonstration in Conakry. "We note that the West Africa sub-region is highly volatile," the religious leaders said in a statement. "The neighboring countries including, Sierra Leone, Liberia, and Cote d'Ivoire, are just coming out of severe and debilitating violent conflict, and therefore the need to sustain the fragile peace. Any conflict in Guinea will invariably affect all other countries in the sub-region and thus cause great suffering for the people. *Religions for Peace* Africa committed to continue its work of conflict transformation, prevention, and peacebuilding in West Africa. Among those in *Religions for Peace* Africa taking a leadership role in the outreach were **His Grace John O. Onaiyekan** and **H.E. Sheikh Shaban Mubajje**, Co-Chairs, and Dr. **Mustafa Y. Ali**, Secretary General.

NIGERIA | INTER-RELIGIOUS CALL FOR WELL-BEING OF THE COUNTRY

The Nigeria Inter Religious Council (*Religions for Peace* Nigeria) led a two-day meeting on the state of the nation in December 2009. The Sultan of Sokoto and President General of the Nigeria Supreme Council for Islamic Affairs, Alhaji Sa'ad Abubakar and the Catholic Archbishop of Abuja **His Grace John O. Onaiyekan** offered prayers for the collective well-being of the country even as they called for consolidation of the religious peace and harmony of Nigerians. Both said that in the last three years the nation has been able to overcome the mutual suspicion and mistrust which used to characterize the relationship between Muslims and Christians.

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SWITZERLAND | RELIGIOUS LEADERS SPEAK OUT ON MINARETS BAN

The recent ban on building minarets in Switzerland is a sad day for Europe, said Bishop Gunnar Stålsett, Moderator of the *Religions for Peace* European Council of Religious Leaders, on 30 November 2009. "I was shocked to learn about the outcome of the referendum in Switzerland," he said. "I lived there for ten years and have learned to appreciate the openness and tolerance of the Swiss people. This is a most regrettable damage not only to the reputation of the people of Switzerland but also a great setback to building a Europe of integration and tolerance. On the global level there is every reason to be disturbed by a growing tendency towards fundamentalism and isolation in many countries."

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JAPAN | MEETING ON AFGHANISTAN HELD IN TOKYO

A three-day international meeting on the promotion of peace and reconciliation in Afghanistan was held 23-25 November 2009 in Tokyo, Japan, under the sponsorship of *Religions for Peace* Japan with the cooperation of the Japanese Foreign Ministry. The role of religious cooperation to advance peace and reconciliation was a central focus. The roles of cross-border, multi-religious cooperation among the neighboring states of Iran, Pakistan, and Saudi Arabia were also discussed.

The participants were from such countries as Afghanistan, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, Iran, and Japan as well as the European Union. Among them are Masoom Stanekzai, an adviser to Afghan President Hamid Karzai on peace negotiations with the Taliban; Tadashi Inuzuka, a House of Councillors member from the ruling Democratic Party of Japan; Kenji Isezaki, former Japanese special representative in Kabul for disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration; and Francesc Vendrell, the EU special representative for Afghanistan, 2002-2008, and the UN secretary general's personal representative for Afghanistan, 2000-2001. Among those representing *Religions for Peace* Japan were **Rev. Nichiko Niwano**, Chairman of *Religions for Peace* Japan and the World Council member who led the consultation and submitted the final statement to the prime minister, as well as other members of the *Religions for Peace* Japan Board; **Dr. William F. Vendley**, Secretary General, and **Rev. Kyoichi Sugino**, Assistant Secretary General, of *Religions for Peace*.

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POLAND | *RELIGIONS FOR PEACE* ISRAEL PAYS VISIT TO POLAND

A delegation of religious leaders from the Interreligious Coordinating Council of Israel (*Religions for Peace* Israel) visited Poland (Warsaw, Lublin, and Kielce) for a reciprocal visit hosted by the Polish Council of Christians and Jews on 14-18 October 2009. The delegation included **Rabbi Dr. Ron Kronish**, Director of *Religions for Peace* Israel, **Ms. Avigail Moshe**, Director of Youth and Young Adult Programs, **Rabbi Prof. Yehoyada Amir**, of the Hebrew Union College, **Rabbi Shlomo Brin** of Yeshivat Har Etzion and the Yaacov Herzog Teachers' College, **Rabbi Yehuda Gilad**, the Founder and Head of Ma'ale Gilboa Yeshiva and Rabbi of Kibbutz Lavi, and **Ms. Zuzanna Radzik**, a Polish-Catholic student intern with *Religions for Peace* Israel.

COLOMBIA | MINE BAN TREATY SUMMIT IN CARTAGENA

Religions for Peace actively participated in the Second Review

Conference of the Mine Ban Treaty held in Cartagena, Colombia, from 30 November to 4 December 2009. Representing *Religions for Peace* were **Dr. Francis Kuria**, Secretary General of the Inter-religious Council of Kenya, **Ven. Sovechea** of Cambodia, and **Ms. Allison Pytlak**, Disarmament Coordinator at the International Secretariat. This is the second review conference for the Mine Ban Treaty, which entered into force ten years ago. It bans the use, production, transfer, and production of anti-personnel landmines, as well as obligates States Parties to destroy stockpiles, clear the land and assist survivors.

Religions for Peace hosted a side event on 2 December 2009. Participants explored the contributions that religious leaders can make toward assisting survivors of landmine accidents in their recovery. More than fifty attended, including religious leaders, survivors, and government officials. The event was developed in partnership with Centro Integral de Rehabilitacion de Colombia, a prominent rehabilitation center headquartered in Bogotá. The delegation also participated in lobbying, and Ms. Pytlak led a session on media engagement to a parallel forum of youth leaders.

UN | NGO COMMITTEE ON DISARMAMENT LEADS PANEL EVENT

On 8 December 2009, the NGO Committee for Disarmament, Peace and Security (NGOCDPS)-on which *Religions for Peace* plays a leading role-organized a brown bag lunch on "Human Development and Disarmament." Ms. Eduarda Hamann (Quaker United Nations Office), Dr. Cathey Falvo (Physicians for Social Responsibility), and Dr. Bob Zuber (Global Action to Prevent War) spoke about the linkages between disarmament and the promotion of human rights as well as between armed violence and a lack of government attention to poverty and health. They discussed the great need for disarmament groups to invest energies and capacities beyond conflict and weapons, to help expand civil society and policy attention to climate health, to ensure the full participation of women in peace processes, and to eliminate the presence of children as combatants in armed conflict. The event was moderated by **Ms. Allison Pytlak**, *Religions for Peace* Disarmament Program Coordinator. The NGOCDPS was established more than thirty years ago to provide services and facilities to hundreds of citizens' groups concerned

with the peace and disarmament activities of the United Nations.

PERU | LATIN AMERICAN AND CARIBBEAN FORUM ON HIV/AIDS

On 19 November 2009, the Ecumenical and Inter-Religious Pre-Forum and V Latin American and Caribbean Forum on HIV / AIDS and STIs released a statement from their meetings. The fora were sponsored by the *Religions for Peace* Latin American and Caribbean Council of Religious Leaders. Playing a leadership role in the event was **Mr. Elias Szczytnicki**, Secretary General of the *Religions for Peace* Latin American and Caribbean Council of Religious Leaders.

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ETHIOPIA & TANZANIA | NEW PARTNERS INITIATIVE ADVANCES AIDS CARE

Religions for Peace and its affiliates in Ethiopia (Ethiopia Interfaith Forum for Development, Dialogue and Action) and Tanzania (*Religions for Peace* Tanzania) held a review meeting in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, ON 19-23 October 2009. The meeting was held at the mid-point of the three-year, \$4 million grant from the U.S. Government for HIV and AIDS work in the two countries.

In Ethiopia, 448 people living with HIV and AIDS have received care and support from trained community members and 1,500 orphans and vulnerable children have received material and educational support. Eighty-nine religious leaders were trained in psycho-social support and have provided spiritual counseling to more than 500 children in the last six months. In Tanzania, more than 200 religious leaders and women of faith leaders have received training in prevention and stigma reduction and have reached more than 2,600 members of their congregations with the messages. In addition, youth have been mobilized to become prevention teachers. Small grants were awarded to 112 participants to launch small businesses. The project is managed by

Mr. Bekele Ababeye in Ethiopia, and by **Dr. Frank Eetaama** in Tanzania. They are supported by **Ms. Deepika Singh**, Director of Program Coordination, and **Ms. Janet Phillips**, NPI Project Coordinator at *Religions for Peace* in New York and **Mr. Joel Oloo**, NPI Project Officer in Nairobi.

USA | "COMMON WORD" CONFERENCE AT GEORGETOWN UNIVERSITY

The fourth "Common Word"-a major Muslim-Christian dialogue-was held at Georgetown University in Washington, DC, on 7 October 2009. Former British Prime Minister [Tony Blair](#), now a mediator in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, said at the opening session, "*The single most important thing is the translation of words into deed. We've got to show - not by a dialogue among the elites, although it is very important that the key people come together - but actually building bridges among people.*" Among the 600 participants was **Dr. Mustafa Ceric**, Raisu-I-Ulamaof the Islamic Community in Bosnia and Herzegovina and a Co-President of the *Religions for Peace* World Council, and **Dr. William F. Vendley**, Secretary General of Religions for Peace.

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USA | WOMEN, RELIGION, AND GLOBALIZATION CONFERENCE

The Women, Religion, and Globalization Conference was held at Yale University on 12-14 November 2009. **Ms. Jacqueline Ogega**, Director of the *Religions for Peace* Women's Mobilization Program, spoke about the *Religions for Peace* Global Women of Faith Network and women as agents of peacebuilding.

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ALBANIA | EUROPE RELIGIOUS LEADERS ENDORSE CODE ON HOLY SITES

The executive committee of the *Religions for Peace* European Council of Religious Leaders met in Tirana, Albania, on 21 October 2009, continuing deliberations started in the council meeting in Lille, France, last May. Among important issues on the agenda was a Code on Holy Sites. "How we deal with holy sites is a burning issue in Albania. We can immediately endorse this document," said **Archbishop Anastasios**, the head of the Albanian Orthodox Church and a member of the *Religions for Peace* affiliate, the Inter-religious Council of Albania. The document offers a vision of a code of conduct on holy sites, dealing especially with situations when two or more religions share the same space. It has been developed through a two-year process involving religious leaders from Europe and the Middle East. UNESCO has already endorsed the document and The Oslo Center for Peace and Human Rights has invited *Religions for Peace* to study and endorse it. The executive committee voted to receive the document with appreciation and recommend it for study within the *Religions for Peace* network.

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QATAR | 7TH ANNUAL DOHA CONFERENCE ON INTERFAITH DIALOGUE

The 7th Annual Doha Conference on Interfaith Dialogue was convened by the Doha International Center for Interfaith Dialogue on 20-21 October 2009. The theme of the conference was "Human Solidarity", and sub-themes included: Human Action in Response to Wars and Disasters, Religious Responses to Natural Disasters and Famines, Solidarity and Economic Interdependence, and Religious Responses for Supporting Holy Sites.

Dr. William F. Vendley, *Religions for Peace* Secretary General, contributed to the agenda with a presentation on "Religious Perspectives on Human Solidarity in Situations of Conflict: The 'Gift of Peace' and the Need for Shared Security." **Mr. Stein Villumstad**, *Religions for Peace* Deputy Secretary General, delivered a presentation on: "Protection of Holy Sites: Need for a Universal Convention?"

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FRANCE | 35TH GENERAL CONFERENCE OF UNESCO

The 35th session of the General Conference of UNESCO was held in Paris on 5-23 October 2009. The 193 Member States meet every other year. Mrs. Irina Bokova, Ambassador of the Republic of Bulgaria to France and Monaco, Permanent Delegate to UNESCO since 2005, was elected the tenth Director General of UNESCO and is the first woman to hold the post since UNESCO's founding in 1945. During the meeting, UNESCO reaffirmed its priorities: do everything in its power to achieve the Millennium Development Goals; continue its efforts to decentralize; serve as the "moral conscience" of the United Nations system to play a leading role in analyzing the repercussions of crises. Representing *Religions for Peace* at the conference was Honorary President **Ms. Jacqueline Rougé** as well as **Ms. Brigitte Chevalier**.

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USA | "PRAYER AND ACTION FOR CHILDREN" DAY GLOBAL LAUNCH

As the international community commemorated the 20th anniversary of the Convention on the Rights of the Child on 20 November 2009, *Religions for Peace* co-sponsored the global launch of the World Day of Prayer and Action for Children two days before. Faith communities around the world engaged in activities related to the well-being of children and the protection of their rights. In New York, *Religions for Peace* and Aritgatou International hosted an interfaith service at the United Nations Church Center. UNICEF Executive Director Ms. Ann M. Veneman noted that religious leaders and faith-based groups have the moral standing and influence to instill a sense of global solidarity, which can help bring about positive change for children. Representing *Religions for Peace* leadership at the interfaith service were **Dr. William F. Vendley**, Secretary General; **Mr. Stein Villumstad**, Deputy Secretary General; and

the Very Rev. Leonid Kishkovsky, Moderator; **Mrs. Judith Hertz**, and **Rev. Dr. Grace Chung Lee**, Co-Presidents. **Rev. Keishi Miyamoto**, the Chairman of Arigatou International and a *Religions for Peace* International Trustee, offered support through Ms. Meg Gardinier, Director of the Artigatou International-New York Office, and her colleague, Ms. Masue Suzuki.

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PHILIPPINES | YOUTH DAY TRAINING ON INTER-RELIGIOUS HARMONY

Asian Youth Day delegates from Thailand, Cambodia, and the Philippines joined the Interreligious Workshop held at the Focolare Center in Manila from 27-30 November 2009. The workshop trained participants on how to host an interreligious gathering; to conduct peace-making in a multi-cultural and multi-religious context; and to promote harmony and dialogue through leadership and networking. The Communication Foundation for Asia (CFA) presented its documentary video "Dear Peace" on its second day of the workshop, to share how media can be used to communicate peace. CFA has been an active partner in the work for interreligious dialogue with the Episcopal Commission on Interreligious Dialogue, Focolare, the National Council of Churches in the Philippines, *Religions for Peace* Philippines and the Asian Conference on *Religions for Peace* (*Religions for Peace* Asia).

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STRENGTHENING THE NETWORK | LOCAL, REGIONAL GLOBAL

Religions for Peace is strengthening its network and developing partnerships around the world at local, national, regional, and international levels. Following are selected actions from 1 October through 31 December 2009.

GLOBAL | NEW AFFILIATES IN AFRICA AND EUROPE ARE LAUNCHED

A number of new inter-religious councils have been launched by *Religions for Peace* affiliates: **the Religions for Peace Interfaith Network of Indian Ocean Islands Countries** and **Religions for Peace Seychelles**. Supporting the development of these African affiliates was **Dr. Mustafa Y. Ali**, Secretary General of the *Religions for Peace* African Council of Religious Leaders (*Religions for Peace Africa*).

In Europe, the **Inter-religious Council of Albania** was launched on 22 October 2009 during a ceremony in Tirana under the auspices of the President of the Republic of Albania His Excellency Prof. Dr Bamir Topi. In his opening address the President said that interreligious dialogue is the face of tolerance and he thanked the inter-religious council for institutionalizing the tolerance of the Albanian people. "I hold heartedly support the work of the interreligious council both personally and as the president."

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In addition, in the presence of HRH Princess Mathilde of Belgium the **Belgian Council of Religious Leaders** was launched at a ceremony in the Belgian Federal Parliament on 17 December 2009. The leaders of major religions in Belgium signed the founding document of the council and expressed commitment to continue to strengthen inter-religious relations in the country. Supporting the launch of these European affiliates was **Rev. Vebjørn Horsfjord**, Secretary General of the *Religions for Peace* European Council of Religious Leaders.

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THAILAND | Encounter of Religious Leaders: Sri Lanka, Thailand

About 120 senior religious leaders and others representing Buddhist, Hindu, Muslim, Christian, and other traditions from Sri Lanka and Thailand gathered in Bangkok on 29 October 2009 to present their unique initiatives in building an inter-religious instrument for high-level advocacy and action to resolve conflict and advance peace. The Sri Lankan delegation represented the Sri Lanka Council of *Religions for Peace*, and the local host was the *Religions for Peace* Inter-religious Council of Thailand; it was the first time the two councils met together. The open encounter was also attended by more than a hundred guests representing government, the diplomatic community in Bangkok, academics, and religious communities. Supporting the religious leaders were **Bishop Gunnar Stålsett**, Moderator, and **Rev. Vebjørn Horsfjord**, Secretary General, of the *Religions for Peace* European Council of Religious Leaders; **Rev. Norio Sakai**, Chairman Emeritus of Rissho Kosei-kai and *Religions for Peace* International Trustee, and **Rev. Kyoichi Sugino**, Assistant Secretary General of *Religions for Peace*.

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USA | NORTH AMERICAN WOMEN OF FAITH SELECT LEADERSHIP

The *Religions for Peace* North American Women of Faith Coordinating Committee on 2 October 2009 selected their co-chairs: **Ms. Parker Diggory**, Presbyterian Church of USA, and **Ms. Salima Ebrahim**, Canadian Council of Muslim Women. The Launch of the North American Women of Faith Network Launch is scheduled for 1-2 March 2010 in New York, concurrent with the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women: Beijing +15.

Also in North America, **Mrs. Rajinderjit Singh**, member of the International Women's Coordinating Committee, has organized outstanding multi-religious awareness programs on Long Island, NY. In partnership with libraries and government officials, Mrs. Singh and the Sikh community have screened educational documentaries including "Pray the Devil Back to Hell" and the educational documentary on fistula, "A Walk to Beautiful."

SCOTLAND | WOMEN OF FAITH PROPOSE NETWORK BUILDING

The *Religions for Peace* European Women of Faith Network, in partnership with the Scottish Inter-Faith Council, proposed the formation of the Scottish Women of Faith Network. Participants launched the Restoring Dignity Initiative in Scotland at a women's conference on 3 November 2009 at the St. Mungo's Museum of Religious Life and Art. **Ms. Yolande Illiano** and **Mrs. Ravinder Kaur Nijjar**, Co-Chairs of *Religions for Peace* European Women of Faith Network, supported the women of faith in their deliberations to form the network.

PHILIPPINES | ASIAN WOMEN OF FAITH TRAIN MINDANAO SURVIVORS

The *Religions for Peace* Asian and Pacific Women of Faith Network held a consultation and training in October 2009 on psychosocial trauma healing for women affected by conflict in Mindanao. This capacity building / training program was designed to address the mental health and psychosocial needs of those victims and survivors affected by armed conflict.

MOZAMBIQUE | AFRICAN REGIONAL MEETING FOCUSES ON HIV, CHILDREN

Strengthening the African regional networks was a goal of the annual coordination meeting held in Maputo, Mozambique, on 16-17 December 2009. Twenty participants from *Religions for Peace* Inter-religious Councils of Ethiopia, Kenya, Malawi, Mozambique, South Africa, Tanzania, Uganda, and Zambia joined together for information sharing regarding best practices and technical expertise. In addition, participants discussed how to build new partnerships with donors and coordinating common strategic focus areas, especially relating to HIV and AIDS, orphans, and vulnerable children. The former president of Mozambique, Mr. Joachim Alberto Chissano, attended the meeting. The participants were supported by **Dr. Mustafa Y. Ali**,

Secretary General and Ms. Florence Omtokoh, Executive Secretary in the Office of Secretary General of the *Religions for Peace* African Council of Religious Leaders, and **Ms. Deepika Singh**, Director of Program Coordination at *Religions for Peace*

BURUNDI | EXPERIENCE-SHARING WORKSHOP ON PEACEBUILDING

The *Religions for Peace* Inter-religious Council of Burundi (Conseil Interconfessionnel du Burundi) is at the mid-point of a two-year USAID-funded project, "overcoming barriers to peace building and reconciliation through multi-religious collaboration in Burundi." The aim of the project has been to enhance peace and reconciliation through multi-religious consolidation and addressing the causes and consequences of instability and violent conflict in Burundi. Participating have been the Roman Catholic Church, the National Council of the Churches of Burundi, and the Islamic Community of Burundi. An experience-sharing workshop was held on 14-16 October 2009 and offered time for strategic planning. Senior religious leaders present included the **Bishop Bernard Ntahoturi**, former President of CNEB and Archbishop of Anglican Church in Burundi and an Honorary President of *Religions for Peace*; **Mgr. Venant Bacinoni**, Bishop of Bururi Diocese; **Mgr. Martin Blaise Nyaboho**, Bishop of Makamba; and **Sheik Sadiki Kajandi**, Legal representative of Comibu. Supporting the religious leaders were **Mr. Hakizimana Isidore**, Project Coordinator of the Inter-religious Council of Burundi, **Mr. Mohammed Noor**, Acting Program Officer for Conflict Transformation and Peace Building for the *Religions for Peace* African Council of Religious Leaders, and **Ms. Deepika Singh**, Director of Program Coordination at *Religions for Peace*.

KENYA | *RELIGIONS FOR PEACE* AFRICA TO HOST AU CONFERENCE

The *Religions for Peace* African Council of Religious Leaders (*Religions for Peace* Africa) will be the convener for the Steering Committee that will prepare for the African Union Conference on 22-24 March 2010. It is a milestone for the *Religions for Peace* movement that its regional leadership has been formally invited to

be the coordinating partner to the African Union. Playing a leadership role in the consultations were **His Grace John O. Onaiyekan**, and **H.E. Sheikh Shaban Mubaje**, Co-Moderators of *Religions for Peace* Africa, and **Dr. Mustafa Y. Ali**, Secretary General of *Religions for Peace* Africa.

URUGUAY | LATIN AMERICAN INTER-RELIGIOUS PEACE EDUCATION NETWORK

The IV Meeting of the Latin American Inter-Religious Network on Peace Education - *Religions for Peace* (RILEP) was held in Montevideo, on 1-3 November 2009, with the cooperation of UNESCO, UNICEF, World Vision, and the Jewish-Christian Fraternity of Uruguay-*Religions for Peace*. The aims of the meeting were: a) to deepen the reflection on the major challenges of peace education and universal values training from an interfaith perspective; b) to promote the exchange of experiences in order to enrich the educational work of the RILEP member institutions and build upon methodologies for interfaith education; and c) to develop the Biennial Operating Plan 2010-2011 of the RILEP. Main speakers of the Meeting were Dr. Thomas Uthup of the UN Alliance of Civilizations, and Mr. Ricardo Hevia and Mr. Julio Carranza of UNESCO. Playing a leadership role at the meeting were **Mr. Jaime Carril**, RILEP Directive Council President, **Mr. Elias Szczytnicki**, Regional Director of the *Religions for Peace* Latin American Council of Religious Leaders, and **Ms. Veronica Molina**, Regional Program Officer.

COSTA RICA | YOUTH NETWORK DEVELOPMENT IN MESO AMERICAN COUNTRIES

The first meeting of the *Religions for Peace* Meso America Youth Network was held in San Jose, Costa Rica, on 5-6 November 2009. Participants were from Mexico, Guatemala, El Salvador, Honduras, and Costa Rica. Organized in cooperation with UNFPA, the meeting focused on youth and migration in Central America. The youth were supported by **Mr. Oscar Amat y Leon**, Regional Network Coordination Officer for the *Religions for Peace* Latin American and Caribbean Council of Religious leaders. Later, on 4-9 December 2009, **Rev. Sherman Herrera**

and **Dr. Flavio Conrado** of the Latin America and Caribbean Youth Network, visited Honduras, El Salvador, and Guatemala to assist in developing the national affiliates in these countries.

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PERU | ANNUAL CONFERENCE ON CLIMATE CHANGE

On 17 November 2009, the *Religions for Peace* Inter-Religious Committee of Peru held its V Peruvian Inter-Religious Conference on "climate change, their repercussions in Peru, and the responses of faith communities," with the cooperation of UNDP. The main speakers were Mr. Antonio Brack, Minister of Environment, Mr. Jorge Chediek, UNDP representative, and Mr. Ivan Lanegra, Deputy for Environment, Public Services and Indigenous Peoples of the Ombudsperson. **Ms. Laura Vargas**, *Religions for Peace* Inter-Religious Committee of Peru Executive Secretary, supported the conference with the assistance of **Mr. Oscar Amat y Leon**, *Religions for Peace* Latin American and Caribbean Council of Religious Leaders Regional Network Coordination Officer.

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EL SALVADOR | MESO-AMERICAN COUNCILS ANNUAL MEETINGS

The *Religions for Peace* Meso American Inter-Religious Network held its third meeting in San Salvador, El Salvador on 5-7 December 2009. Participating were representatives of the *Religions for Peace* affiliates from Guatemala, El Salvador, Honduras, Nicaragua, Costa Rica and Panama, and sub-regional women and youth networks. The meeting was supported by UNFPA and UNDP. Participants organized the First Central American Tripartite Forum on Inter-Religious Cooperation for Development, with the cooperation of the Secretariat of the Central American Social Integration (SISCA), about the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals in the sub-

region. In addition, a special session on the situation in Honduras, with the participation of the large delegation of religious leaders from this neighbor country, including **H.E. Cardinal Oscar Rodriguez Maradiaga**, Co-President of the *Religions for Peace* World Council. Playing a leadership role at the meeting was **Most Rev. Martin Barahona**, Meso American Inter-Religious Network Moderator, with the assistance of **Mr. Oscar Amat y Leon**, Regional Network Coordination Officer, and **Ms. Veronica Molina**, Regional Program Officer, of the *Religions for Peace* Latin American and Caribbean Council of Religious Leaders.

CANADA | 3rd Annual Forum for Faith-Based Organizations

Religions for Peace convened the Third Annual Forum for Faith-Based Organizations in Toronto 26-27 October 2009. Thirty participants representing twenty-five organizations from Africa, Europe, and North America shared experiences and insights. Faith-based humanitarian, development, and peace organizations are working closely with many religious communities and structures on local and national levels. The search for how to work across religions dominated the agenda. Participants engaged with observations from the "Listening Project" of the CDA Collaborative Learning Projects on how local communities should be deeply involved in addressing how aid is delivered. The FBO Forum also discussed how to effectively engage in multi-religious action research and advocacy efforts to alleviate suffering and address injustice. Participants suggested forming a working group for humanitarian advocacy at the United Nations, to be facilitated by *Religions for Peace*. Among those representing the *Religions for Peace* International Secretariat were **Mr. Stein Villumstad**, Deputy Secretary General, and **Ms. Lisa Locke**, Director of Institutional Support. The forum was generously hosted by Islamic Relief Canada; the Muslim Association of Canada hosted the participants one evening in their school. [VIDEO](#)

EUROPE | STRENGTHENING PARTNERSHIPS, RESOURCE MOBILIZATION

Dr. Mustafa Y. Ali, Secretary General of the *Religions for Peace* Council of Religious Leaders (*Religions for Peace* Africa), and

Rev. Vebjorn Horsjford, Secretary General of the *Religions for Peace* European Council of Religious Leaders, joined International Secretariat staff members **Mr. Stein Villumstad**, Deputy Secretary General, and **Ms. Lisa Locke**, Director of Institutional Support, to meet *Religions for Peace's* institutional donors partners in northern Europe. The visits included long-time supporters such as Finn Church Aid, Norwegian Church Aid and the Foreign Ministries of Norway and Finland. Potential partnerships were discussed with like-minded agencies including Islamic Relief Worldwide, Christian Aid and Humanitarian Forum. The visit strengthened the collaboration between the Secretariat and the regional affiliates in the area of resource mobilization and raised the profile of the regional councils with these organizations.

SOUTH AFRICA | MOULANA FAISEL KHAN DIES

It is with deep regret that we learned of the passing of **Moulana Faisal Khan**, Vice President of the Sunni Jumiat of South Africa and of *Religions for Peace* South Africa. Moulana Khan will be specially remembered by the inter-faith community for his commitment to reaching out to promote justice, peace, and understanding locally, nationally and internationally. His respect for all his colleagues and friends in the inter-religious community was a tribute to his stature. He was one of the first moulanas to commit to working in prevention of HIV and AIDS, eradicating the stigma against the afflicted, and supporting children orphaned by the disease. He supported the launching of the *Religions for Peace* Kwazulu-Natal Inter-religious Council. His humility, warmth, kindness, and sense of humor contributed to the love and respect that was accorded him in so many communities. His wisdom and guidance in *Religions for Peace* will be greatly missed.

SECRETARIAT | MS. MASUE SUZUKI JOINS ARIGATOU INTERNATIONAL

Ms. Masue Suzuki, Assistant to the Office of the Secretary General, left the *Religions for Peace* International Secretariat in late 2009. Ms. Suzuki has joined the New York-based Secretariat

of the World Day of Prayer and Action for Children, an initiative of Arigatou International. Please join in wishing her well in her new endeavors.

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GOVERNANCE | WORLD COUNCIL, HONORARY PRESIDENTS, AND INTERNATIONAL TRUSTEES

Religions for Peace World Council Co-Presidents, Honorary Presidents, and International Trustees have been advancing peace around the world. These are some of their achievements from 1 October through 31 December 2009.

PRESIDENT EMERITUS | ADVANCING PEACE AROUND THE WORLD

HRH Prince El Hassan bin Talal of Jordan, President Emeritus of *Religions for Peace*, had a full calendar of speaking engagements on peace in the last quarter. Among his presentations were: at the College of William and Mary in the USA on 15 October 2009; at the West Asia and North Africa Post Conflict Reconstruction and Recovery Consultation on 25 October 2009; at the Third Convening of the Parliamentarians Network for Conflict Prevention and Human Security on 4 November 2009; and at the Global Reconciliation Summit in Amman, Jordan, on 14 December 2009.

In addition, HRH Prince El Hassan bin Talal on 17 November 2009 was formally admitted as an Honorary Fellow of the Royal Society of Edinburgh (RSE) for "his outstanding commitment to peace and human rights." As part of a three-day visit to Scotland, HRH delivered a lecture to members and guests of the RSE that outlined his vision of how the global community needs to order itself to move toward a peaceful world.

WORLD COUNCIL | METROPOLITAN EMMANUEL ELECTED HEAD OF CONFERENCE OF EUROPEAN CHURCHES

Religions for Peace Co-President **Metropolitan Emmanuel** of France, Patriarchate Liaison Office of the European Union, was elected the new President of the Conference of European Churches. In his acceptance speech, Metropolitan Emmanuel mentioned among his priorities as CEC head the work "to reinforce the involvement of the Orthodox Churches and to encourage their constructive presence in the life of CEC." **Dr. William F. Vendley**, *Religions for Peace* Secretary General said, "He is a visionary and innovative leader known for his pastoral wisdom and deep kindness. He is deservedly held in high esteem around the world for his enduring concern and efforts to promote peace and human rights."

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HONORARY PRESIDENT | H.E. Archbishop Turkson at Vatican

A *Religions for Peace* Honorary President, **H.E. Archbishop Peter Cardinal Kodwo Appiah Turkson**, has been elevated to the high position of President of the Vatican's Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace. "Cardinal Turkson is deservedly held in high esteem for his wisdom, commitment to justice and peace and his leadership in multi-religious cooperation for peace," said **Dr. William F. Vendley**, *Religions for Peace* Secretary General.

Honorary President | Ms. Ela Gandhi meets Japanese officials

Religions for Peace Honorary President **Ms. Ela Gandhi**, Trustee of the Mahatma Gandhi Trust, visited Japan at the invitation of **Rev. Norio Sakai**, a *Religions for Peace* International Trustee, in November 2009. In addition to her meetings with Mr. Shintaro Ishihara, Governor of Tokyo, members of *Religions for Peace*

Japanese Trustees, and high school students, she had a presentation and dialogue with senior women members of the Japanese Diet from across party lines. Ms. Gandhi to present Gandhi's practice of non-violence, empowerment of women, as well as women's role in the South Africa's process of truth and reconciliation. The meeting was supported by **Rev. Kyoichi Sugino**, *Religions for Peace* Assistant Secretary General.

WORLD COUNCIL | VEN. TEP VONG AWARDED HONORARY DOCTORATE

A *Religions for Peace* Co-President, **Ven. Tep Vong**, The Great Supreme Patriarch of Kingdom of Cambodia, received an honorary doctorate at the Viet Nam Buddhist University on 8 September 2009. The doctorate acknowledged contributions to peace, justice, improvement of people's spiritual life and to Buddhism education around the world. Almost 550 students who completed their Buddhism studies at the Viet Nam Buddhist University received their degrees in the presence of Buddhist dignitaries from several countries.

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NEW | PUBLICATIONS & TOOLS

Religions for Peace produced new publications and tools for use throughout the global coalition from 1 October through 31 December 2009.

Restoring Dignity: A Toolkit for Religious Communities to End Violence Against Women

This toolkit was designed in collaboration with religious leaders from countries around the world for women and men of faith working at the community, national, or international level to help address violence against women.

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2010 women's interfaith calendar

The Women's Interfaith Calendar 2010 includes quotes from women of faith around the world and a broad range of holidays from the world's major faith traditions.

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A Call to Act: Engaging Religious Leaders and Communities on Addressing Gender-Based Violence and HIV

This is a new guide co-produced by *Religions for Peace* and USAID. "Religious leaders possess an ordained role of leadership in their institutions and communities, serving as role models of care and compassion. As religions around the world speak to the inherent sacredness of human life, religious leaders and their communities have the moral authority to raise awareness about gender-based violence and a moral responsibility to prevent violence, provide support and care, and strive to transform societal or religious norms or practices that perpetuate such violence and vulnerability to HIV."

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HEADS UP | FORTHCOMING EVENTS

1-2 Mar. -*Religions for Peace* North American Women of Faith Network launch, New York

1-12 Mar. -UN Commission on the Status of Women, New York

9-12 Mar.-*Religions for Peace* Great Lakes Inter-religious Network consultation, Rwanda

8-9 Mar.-*Religions for Peace*-UNICEF Consultation on Children in Conflict Situations, New York

21-22 Mar.-Third Muslim Philanthropists Congress, Doha

22-24 Mar.-African Union consultation with *Religions for Peace* Africa, Nigeria

22-23 Mar.-Summit of High-Level Religious Leaders on HIV/AIDS, Netherlands

TBD April-High-Level Summit on Geneva Declaration of Armed Violence and civil society forum, Oslo

26-28 Apr.-*Religions for Peace* European Council of Religious Leaders committee meeting, Istanbul

3-28 May-Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty Review Conference, New York

12-14 May-*Religions for Peace* Asia Executive Committee meeting, China

28-29 May-Third Forum on the Alliance of Civilizations, Rio

21-23 June-World Religions Summit: Interfaith Leaders in the G8 Nations, Winnipeg

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Questions, comments, or news? Kindly contact:

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RELIGIONS FOR PEACE-the world's largest and most representative multi-religious coalition-advances common action among the world's religious communities for peace. *Religions for Peace* works to transform violent conflict, advance human development, promote just and harmonious societies, and protect the earth. The global *Religions for Peace* network comprises a World Council of senior religious leaders from all regions of the world; six regional inter-religious bodies and more than seventy national ones; and the Global Women of Faith Network and Global Youth Network.

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