

Press Release

Great potential: Women as peacemakers

Second day of the *Religions for Peace* 10th World Assembly

Religious representatives from MENA-Region (Middle East and North Africa) discuss the role of women in the global dialogue for peace – In the evening: Outdoor multi-religious meal shared among delegates and citizens of Lindau

21 August 2019 | Lindau, Germany – In a special session moderated by **Rt. Rev. Bishop Petra Bosse-Huber**, Bishop for Ecumenical Relations and Ministries abroad, Evangelical Church in Germany; Co-Moderator, *Religions for Peace*, high-ranking representatives of Tunisia, Iraq, Egypt and Bahrain addressed the role of women in multi-religious dialogue for peace. At the Inselhalle in Lindau, the delegates also discussed the prevention and transformation of violent conflict. The delegates will conclude the day with open-air, multi-religious dinner with local Lindauers at a long table on Lindau's market square.

Honorable Mehrézia Labidi-Maiza First Vice-President of the Constituent Assembly of Tunisia and Honorary President of *Religions for Peace*, is committed to a change of perspective – turning away from religion as a separating factor and towards a reflection on the fundamental peacebuilding values of all religions such as humanity, the development of empathy and self-reflection, and the pursuit of peaceful coexistence. It has been proven that women worldwide play a specific and important role in peacebuilding processes, but are often not highlighted enough in their role. The organizers of *Religions for Peace* want to do justice to this reality this year. In addition to **Hon. Labidi-Maiza**, **Ms. Layla Alkhafaji**, former Iraqi MP, member of the political bureau of the Al-Hikmah Movement and former Director of International Relations of the Hakim Foundation; **H.E. Minister Nabila Makram**, Egyptian Minister of Immigration and representative of the Middle East Council of Churches; and **H.E. Ambassador Houda Ezra Nonoo**, former Bahraini Ambassador to the United States, also participated in the discussion at Inselhalle.

The delegates and participants learned more about *RfP's* tested method and approach of transforming violent conflict in both Myanmar and Nigeria. In Myanmar, *RfP* has developed a multi-level, multi-stakeholder approach to supporting efforts to end violent conflict, including decades-long conflicts between the military and armed ethnic groups. At the diplomatic level, a high-level multi-religious delegation was invited to visit the country and deliver the "Letter to the Peoples of Myanmar" carrying a call for the establishment of the *Religions for Peace* Advisory Forum on National Reconciliation and Peace in Myanmar. To respond to the critical lack of "open space" for dialogue and cooperation among all stakeholders, this program builds a unique multi-religious and multi-stakeholder mechanism for dialogue and action. The government has publicly acknowledged the critical role religious leaders play in transforming conflict and pledged to support *RfP* work on dialogue and multi-religious cooperation. Following these efforts to establish peace and reconciliation in Myanmar, *Religions for Peace-*

Myanmar (*Rfp-M*) has been recognized as “the most high-profile and visible international specialist interfaith actor” working in the context.

H.E. John Cardinal Onaiyekan, Archbishop of Abuja, Nigeria and Co-Moderator of *Rfp* and **H.M. Sultan Muhammad Sa’ad Abubakar III**, Sultan of Sokoto and Co-President of *Rfp*, discussed their work leading multi-religious action combatting violent extremism and promoting dialogue to reduce tension across ethnic and religious divides in Nigeria. Following their advocacy efforts to the government to promote dialogue over excessive use of force, an agreement was reached that led to the return of the remaining Chibok schoolgirls captured by Boko Haram.

The International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons (ICAN), a partner of *Religions for Peace*, presented the first “Action Point” in the Plenary Meeting calling for further educating, mobilizing and engaging religious leaders and communities on the catastrophic consequences of nuclear weapons, affirming support for the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons for the total elimination of nuclear weapons, and calling on all governments to sign and ratify it as soon as possible.

The delegates and guests took part in an multireligious and spiritual ceremony at the *Ring for Peace* in the Luitpoldpark, a 7.5 metre wooden sculpture that will be a permanent symbol of peace among religions. In his address at the Ring for Peace Ceremony, **H.E. Miguel Ángel Moratinos Cuyaubé**, United Nations High Representative for the Alliance of Civilizations, emphasised that the global preservation and protection of religious sites is a sign of respect for the diversity of the world’s religions and their *raison d’être*.

In the evening, the local religious communities of Lindau are inviting both the local citizens and the delegates of the World Assembly to share a meal at a long, communal table on the market square of Lindau. The long table is organized by the Protestant pastor **Jörg Hellmut** and catholic priest **Robert Skrzypek** together with local referent **Elfriede Fischer**. At a joint dinner, citizens and other interested parties will have the opportunity to talk to the delegates. As **Ulrich Schneider**, Managing Director of the *Foundation Peace Dialogue of the World Religions and Civil Society*, concludes, “Lindau can look forward to a lively evening with representatives from many different cultures.”

For further information and photos see:

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