

Press release

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Topics: First female General Secretary of Religions for Peace officially takes office - Results of Track II Peace Consultations - Closing Ceremony

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Declaration adopted

At a closing ceremony, the declaration was adopted by the delegates with resolutions and results for the 10th World Assembly. Among other things, *RfP* wants to prevent violent conflicts by advancing peace education from early childhood to adults and build skills in conflict management. On the basis of the *Peace Charter for Forgiveness and Reconciliation*, the healing of historical wounds and painful memories of the conflict parties is integrated into all conflict resolution work. *RfP* leads by good example in “welcoming the other” and commits to instilling the respect, mutuality and solidarity that are essential to harmonious, diverse communities. *RfP* will also continue to work for the human rights of vulnerable communities. The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) will be committed to *RfP*, not only through the continued support of the *Interfaith Rainforest Initiative*, but also, for example, through its commitment to sustainable consumption, the dignity of labor and an equitable distribution of wealth. The role of women and youth in society and their leadership in institutions at the local, regional, national and global levels will be further promoted. With regard to climate change, religious communities will be mobilized to protect the earth, including the promotion of "green congregations".

New Secretary General elected

The world's largest multi-religious alliance *Religions for Peace* also introduced its new Secretary General, **Prof Dr Azza Karam**, the first woman elected to this position. The Cairo-born Dutch scientist researches religions and development at the University of Amsterdam. As *Senior Advisor* on Culture she works for the UNFPA (*United Nations Population Fund*) and chairs the Inter-Agency Task Force on Religion and Development for the United Nations. **Azza Karam** has many years of experience as a *Lead Facilitator* and trainer for inter-cultural leadership in Europe, the Arab world and Central Asia. She is also *Lead Facilitator* for Religion, Development and Diplomacy for the United Nations. She succeeds **Dr William F. Vendley**, who headed *Religions for Peace* for 25 years.

In addition, the new 80-member *RfP* World Council was elected, which will in the future include **Bishop Margot Käßmann** from Germany. The chairman of the *Foundation Peace Dialogue of the World Religions and Civil Society* **Prof Dr Wolfgang Schürer** was elected Honorary President of *Religions for Peace*.

During the closing ceremony, a declaration with resolutions and results was adopted by the delegates of the *RfP* 10th World Assembly. The world's largest and most representative multi-religious coalition advancing concrete action for peace, *Religions for Peace*, also introduced its new General Secretary, **Prof Dr Azza Karam**, the first woman elected to this role.

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The religions of the world agree that nature must be protected as the foundation of all life on earth. Thus, global climate change has brought together followers of all religions. After all, it has long been known that climate change can become one of the key causes of future disputes over water and resources and trigger unprecedented levels of migration. In response to this global crisis, *Religions for Peace* and partner organizations launched the *Interfaith Rainforest Initiative*. *IRI* brings together religious representatives, indigenous peoples and government representatives to protect rainforests around the world. **Sonia Guajajara**, born in a village in the Amazon rainforest, ran for vice-presidency in Brazil in 2018 and now leads *the Articulação dos Povos Indígenas do Brasil* (*Articulation of the Indigenous Peoples of Brazil*), an organization that represents around 300 indigenous ethnic groups in Brazil. In this capacity, Guajajara is also involved in *IRI*, which, using the pre-existing infrastructure of the global *RfP* network, has begun implementing projects to protect rainforests in Colombia and Peru as well as Brazil, Indonesia and the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). **Bishop Dr Gunnar Stålsett** and **Sonia Guajajara** presented the Action Point calling for religious leaders and communities to promote teaching about the spiritual, moral, scientific, humanitarian and human rights case for ending tropical deforestation and advocate for government policies that protect rainforests and the rights of indigenous peoples.

Track II Peace Consultations

In order for sustainable and positive peace to be cultivated, it is also necessary to mediate between the parties in existing serious conflicts. The causes often include different values and,

in many cases, national and religious identities are misused to fuel conflicts. In order to bring the peacemaking values of the religions to the forefront, *Religions for Peace* promotes the involvement of religious representatives in peace negotiations.

In the Track II Peace Consultations, *Religions for Peace* brings religious representatives together to mediate and consolidate peace. Behind closed doors and in a protected setting, a shared values to guide common action are promoted. The Peace Consultations of the 10th World Assembly in Lindau addressed the conflict regions of Myanmar and Bangladesh, North and South Korea, the protection of minorities in the MENA region, using the framework of the Marrakesh Declaration, religious reconciliation in the Central African Republic, the civil war in South Sudan and the fragile government in the Democratic Republic of Congo.

Conclusion

Religions for Peace—the world’s largest and most-representative multi-religious coalition advancing common action among religious communities for peace—is looking back on a productive and interactive World Assembly in Lindau, which also inspired interest and enthusiasm among the local population. Under the new Secretary General, **Prof Dr Azza Karam**, *RfP* will work on implementing the decisions and recommendations adopted in its declaration and the Commission bodies will communicate their opinions internationally. According to the wish of the chairman of the *Foundation Peace Dialogue of the World Religions and Civil Society* in Lindau, **Prof Dr Wolfgang Schürer**, and its managing director **Ulrich Schneider**, the city of Lindau could host several *Religions for Peace* meetings in the future. In the spirit of the Moebius strip *Ring for Peace* in Lindau’s Luitpoldpark, *Religions for Peace* will continue to promote concrete action of religions for peace.

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Pressure is rising due to Amazon forest fires

Topics: First female General Secretary of Religions for Peace officially takes office - Results of Track II Peace Consultations - Closing Ceremony

23 August 2019 | Lindau, Germany - One theme of the *Religions for Peace* 10th World Assembly in Lindau is mobilizing the resources of religious communities for the protection of the earth. Among other activities, *Religions for Peace (RfP)* contributes to this objective through its cooperation with the Interfaith Rainforest Initiative (IRI) – an initiative bringing the commitment, influence and moral authority of religions to efforts to protect the world’s rainforests and the indigenous peoples that serve as their guardians. Lutheran **Bishop Emeritus of Oslo in Norway, Dr Gunnar Stålsett**, IRI Global Advisor and Honorary President of *RfP*, has been a co-panelist with **Sonia Guajajara**, leader of the Articulation of the Indigenous Peoples of Brazil. Due to the current devastating forest fires in Brazil, the initiative received special attention.

Declaration adopted

At a closing ceremony, the declaration was adopted by the delegates with resolutions and results for the 10th World Assembly. Among other things, *RfP* wants to prevent violent conflicts by advancing peace education from early childhood to adults and build skills in conflict management. On the basis of the *Peace Charter for Forgiveness and Reconciliation*, the healing of historical wounds and painful memories of the conflict parties is integrated into all conflict resolution work. *RfP* leads by good example in “welcoming the other” and commits to instilling the respect, mutuality and solidarity that are essential to harmonious, diverse communities. *RfP* will also continue to work for the human rights of vulnerable communities. The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) will be committed to *RfP*, not only through the continued support of the *Interfaith Rainforest Initiative*, but also, for example, through its commitment to sustainable consumption, the dignity of labor and an equitable distribution of wealth. The role of women and youth in society and their leadership in institutions at the local, regional, national and global levels will be further promoted. With regard to climate change, religious communities will be mobilized to protect the earth, including the promotion of "green congregations".

New Secretary General elected

The world's largest multi-religious alliance *Religions for Peace* also introduced its new Secretary General, **Prof Dr Azza Karam**, the first woman elected to this position. The Cairo-born Dutch scientist researches religions and development at the University of Amsterdam. As *Senior Advisor* on Culture she works for the UNFPA (*United Nations Population Fund*) and chairs the Inter-Agency Task Force on Religion and Development for the United Nations. **Azza Karam** has many years of experience as a *Lead Facilitator* and trainer for inter-cultural leadership in Europe, the Arab world and Central Asia. She is also *Lead Facilitator* for Religion, Development and Diplomacy for the United Nations. She succeeds **Dr William F. Vendley**, who headed *Religions for Peace* for 25 years.

In addition, the new 80-member *RfP* World Council was elected, which will in the future include **Bishop Margot Käßmann** from Germany. The chairman of the *Foundation Peace Dialogue of the World Religions and Civil Society* **Prof Dr Wolfgang Schürer** was elected Honorary President of *Religions for Peace*.

During the closing ceremony, a declaration with resolutions and results was adopted by the delegates of the *RfP* 10th World Assembly. The world's largest and most representative multi-religious coalition advancing concrete action for peace, *Religions for Peace*, also introduced its new General Secretary, **Prof Dr Azza Karam**, the first woman elected to this role.

Interfaith Rainforest Initiative

The religions of the world agree that nature must be protected as the foundation of all life on earth. Thus, global climate change has brought together followers of all religions. After all, it has long been known that climate change can become one of the key causes of future disputes over water and resources and trigger unprecedented levels of migration. In response to this global crisis, *Religions for Peace* and partner organizations launched the *Interfaith Rainforest Initiative*. *IRI* brings together religious representatives, indigenous peoples and government representatives to protect rainforests around the world. **Sonia Guajajara**, born in a village in the Amazon rainforest, ran for vice-presidency in Brazil in 2018 and now leads *the Articulação dos Povos Indígenas do Brasil* (*Articulation of the Indigenous Peoples of Brazil*), an organization that represents around 300 indigenous ethnic groups in Brazil. In this capacity, Guajajara is also involved in *IRI*, which, using the pre-existing infrastructure of the global *RfP* network, has begun implementing projects to protect rainforests in Colombia and Peru as well as Brazil, Indonesia and the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). **Bishop Dr Gunnar Stålsett** and **Sonia Guajajara** presented the Action Point calling for religious leaders and communities to promote teaching about the spiritual, moral, scientific, humanitarian and human rights case for ending tropical deforestation and advocate for government policies that protect rainforests and the rights of indigenous peoples.

Track II Peace Consultations

In order for sustainable and positive peace to be cultivated, it is also necessary to mediate between the parties in existing serious conflicts. The causes often include different values and,

in many cases, national and religious identities are misused to fuel conflicts. In order to bring the peacemaking values of the religions to the forefront, *Religions for Peace* promotes the involvement of religious representatives in peace negotiations.

In the Track II Peace Consultations, *Religions for Peace* brings religious representatives together to mediate and consolidate peace. Behind closed doors and in a protected setting, a shared values to guide common action are promoted. The Peace Consultations of the 10th World Assembly in Lindau addressed the conflict regions of Myanmar and Bangladesh, North and South Korea, the protection of minorities in the MENA region, using the framework of the Marrakesh Declaration, religious reconciliation in the Central African Republic, the civil war in South Sudan and the fragile government in the Democratic Republic of Congo.

Conclusion

Religions for Peace—the world’s largest and most-representative multi-religious coalition advancing common action among religious communities for peace—is looking back on a productive and interactive World Assembly in Lindau, which also inspired interest and enthusiasm among the local population. Under the new Secretary General, **Prof Dr Azza Karam**, *RfP* will work on implementing the decisions and recommendations adopted in its declaration and the Commission bodies will communicate their opinions internationally. According to the wish of the chairman of the *Foundation Peace Dialogue of the World Religions and Civil Society* in Lindau, **Prof Dr Wolfgang Schürer**, and its managing director **Ulrich Schneider**, the city of Lindau could host several *Religions for Peace* meetings in the future. In the spirit of the Moebius strip *Ring for Peace* in Lindau’s Luitpoldpark, *Religions for Peace* will continue to promote concrete action of religions for peace.

For further information and photos see:

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