

Press release

1st Assembly on Women, Faith & Diplomacy: Religiously motivated hatred must be countered with diplomacy

High participation in virtual *Religions for Peace* conference: more than 1,500 daily livestream participants / tens of thousands reached via social channels – Focus on women and diplomacy – Covid-19 requires more dialogue with religious leaders

Lindau, 13 November 2020 – Multi-religious exchange and dialogue are crucial to counteract religiously motivated terrorist attacks. This was the consensus among the more than one thousand fivehundred participants who exchanged views over four days as part of the *1st Assembly on Women, Faith & Diplomacy* of the interfaith non-governmental organisation *Religions for Peace*. In view of the Islamist terrorist attacks in Vienna and Nice, Azza Karam, Secretary General of *Religions for Peace*, stressed the importance of women in the fight against violence and hatred: “Faith enables us to seek common ground – women should raise their voices more strongly and firmly oppose hate speech and acts of discrimination and hatred in the name of religion. Multi-religious female voices, in particular, create new and important ways of conducting diplomacy, which are necessary in today’s world.”

The common goal during the conference: to explore new paths to promote inter-religious dialogue even in difficult times. The first international assembly specifically on women, faith and diplomacy took place under the motto “Keeping Faith, Transforming Tomorrow”. Representatives of Hindu, Buddhist, Jewish, Christian, Islamic and other faiths discussed new, mainly female approaches to shaping politics and society. The topics of the conference, which was organised by a steering team based in Lindau on Lake Constance in Germany, included the global role of women and their challenges in leading positions as well as their responsibilities in multi-religious peacebuilding and international development.

In numerous discussion sessions, workshops, presentations and one-on-one conversations, the participants discussed the importance of faith as a central component of conflict resolution and the need for inter-religious encounters and ongoing dialogue. Emina Frljak, Programme Coordinator of *Youth for Peace* in Bosnia and Herzegovina, cautioned against a further escalation of violence: “We live in a polarised world, in a world where violence is on the rise, where conflict is on the increase. If someone commits acts of violence in the name of Islam, the 1.6 billion Muslims worldwide are not to blame for these acts. But when such violence happens, we as a multi-religious community must speak up and together say: This is not religion, this is not in our name.”

Another main focus during the conference was on the central role of religious leaders and organisations in dealing with the Covid-19 pandemic and the delivery of humanitarian assistance. Sharon Rosen, Global Director of Religious Engagement at Search for Common Ground and a member of the Council of *Religions for Peace*, called on governments around the world to seek dialogue with religious organisations in order to promote greater acceptance of hygiene measures and thus better control the pandemic.

The conference was held by the Foundation *Peace Dialogue of the World Religions and Civil Society (Ring for Peace)*, based in Lindau, and its Chairman Wolfgang Schürer, who has also been a Trustee and Honorary President of *Religions for Peace* since 2019. It was supported and funded by the German Federal Foreign Office. The managing director of the foundation Ulrich Schneider was pleased with the high level of virtual participation in the conference: “We have set standards when it comes to virtual conferences. Every day, more than one thousand five hundred people from all over the world took part in the event online. Despite the pandemic, we have succeeded in establishing an intensive dialogue between the participants. The inter-religious Peace & Light ceremony at the *Ring for Peace* symbol erected last year in Lindau was a moving moment that inspired hope.”

Special thanks to the City of Lindau, Lord Mayor Claudia Alfons, Lindau Tourism and the teams of the Inselhalle as well as the Public Utility Company of Lindau for their support during the conference.

Further information, photos for download, livestreams, vitae, press releases and regular updates can be found at:

<https://ringforpeace.org/>

#womenfaithdiplomacy #religionsforpeace

#ringforpeace #rfp20

facebook.com/ringforpeace

instagram.com/ringforpeace

<https://rfp.org>

facebook.com/religionsforpeaceintl

instagram.com/religions4peace

General press contact:

presse@ringforpeace.org

Press contact Berlin:

Julia Naumann, naumann@betternau.de, +49 152 557 540 51

Press contact Lindau:

Dr. Jessica D.S. Knall, jessica.knall@ringforpeace.org, +49 172 9451588

Press contact international:

Mary Grace Donohoe, mgedonohoe@rfp.org, +1 212 687 2163